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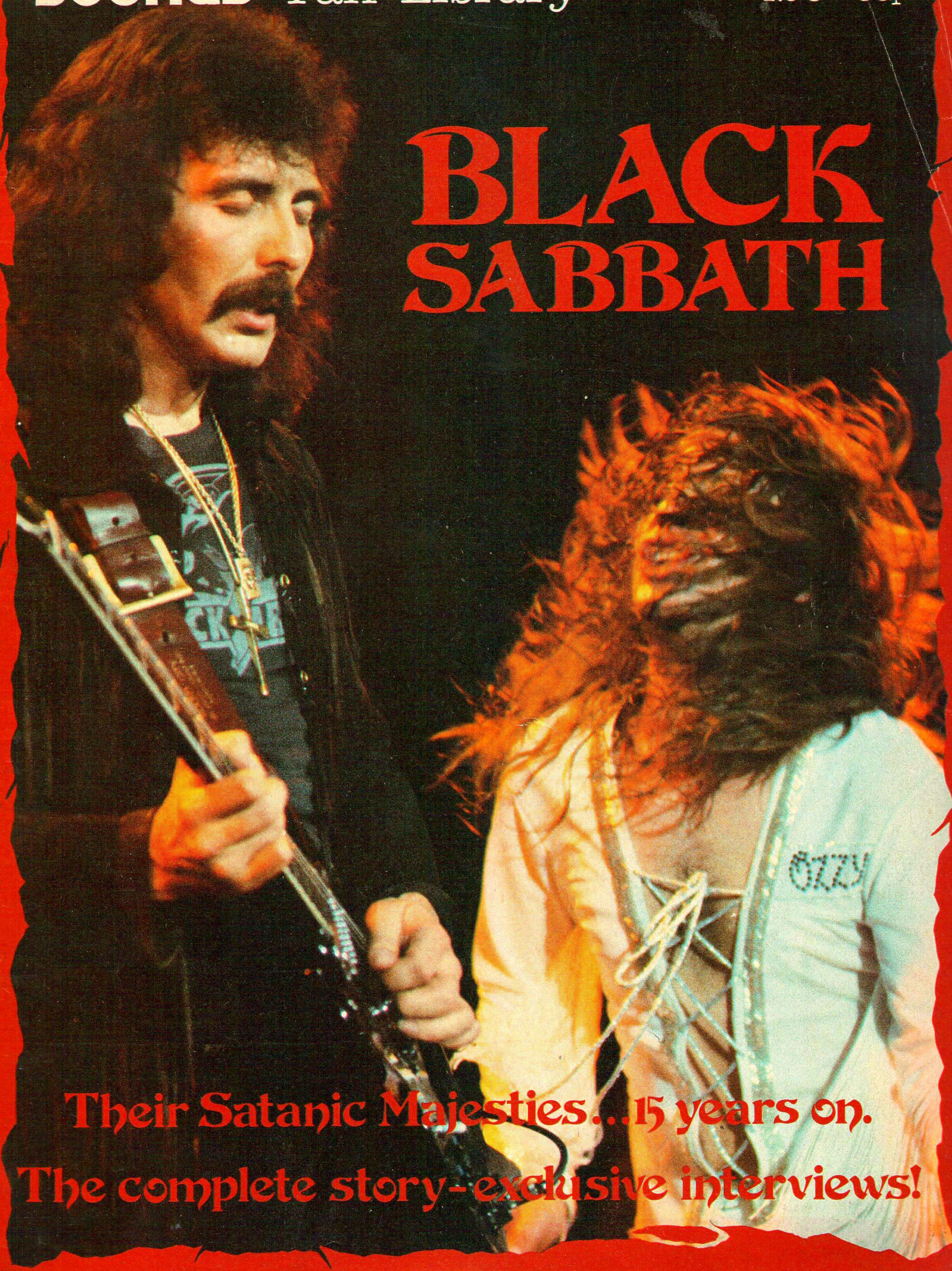
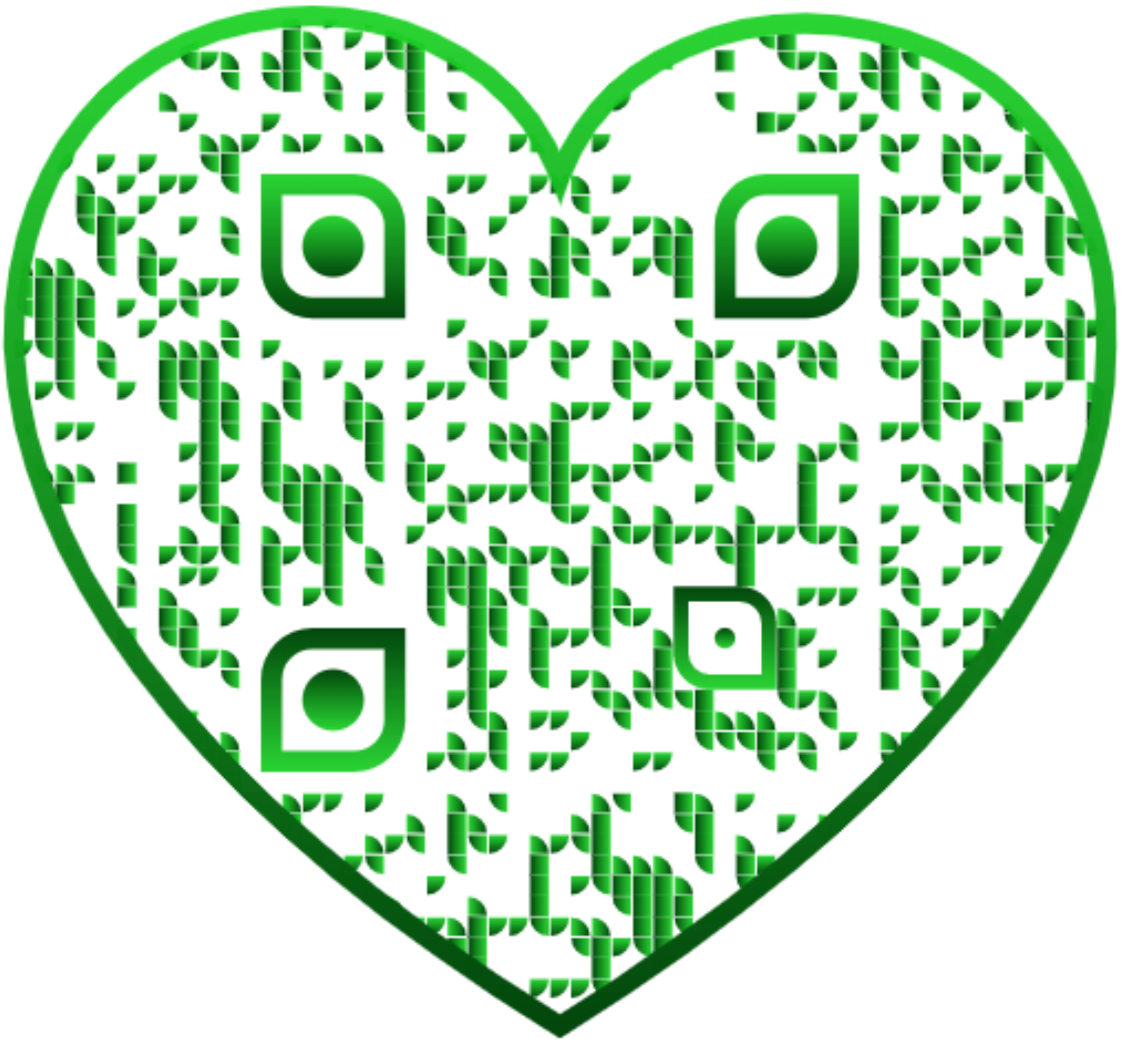
BLACK SABBATH



Their Satanic Majesties...15 years on.

The complete story-exclusive interviews!



Fan Library No 8

COME TO THE SABBATH!

Fifteen years on, and Black Sabbath continue to reign supreme as masters of metal mayhem. Despite the odd change in personnel, the Sabs have carried on relentlessly and still have a massive following of fanatical devotees.

This issue of the SOUNDS FAN LIBRARY covers the complete history of the band, together with fresh interviews with Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler, and plenty of pictures, many of which have never been published before.

The whole project took many a sleepless night to produce and we would like to thank the following: Tony'n Geez, Paul Clark, Dave 'Pinky Blue' Henderson, Big Al Lewis, Steve Joule (for the above satanic design!), Rickie Lee's 'Pirates' and Boy George. . .without whom none of this would have been possible!

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Fin Costello

1. EARTHLY DAYS

IT MIGHT just be true . . .

Dat ol' Black Magic and hokus pokus may in fact have rubbed off on Sabbath. I mean there's no actual rational explanation one can credit to explain their astonishing longevity/durability in a business that is renowned for eating up and spitting out the remains of any unsuspecting victim, with the eagerness and sadistic glee of some rabid, vampirific vulture of which the Sabs could have easily fallen foul of many times in their chequered career.

In this game if you're on a low ebb or your defences are down, then the odds are that you're typecast for the chopping block, easy prey for this parasite. One of the understatements of all time would be to say that Sabbath have had a turbulent career.

In the world of palmistry their lifeline would be festooned with the scars of managerial and internal disputes; both legally and musically they've had enough upheavals to sink any other less sturdy vessel.

If not for anything else Black Sabbath can go down in history as the group that totally defied the laws of logic, but then again we're dealing with a business that has no gravity and allows minimal time or space for reality or rationality.

In the true world of Mr Everyday McAverage, in no way would the Sabs have survived since they could never have been regarded as a realistic or viable concern.

Even in this crazy mixed up shambolic facade of a game they have displayed a strength and resonance that has outlasted fashions/fads, seen other groups grow, peak and burn out with a meteoric ferocity; in fact they have travelled through three decades and are still superficially intact and probably more popular than ever.

Yes, a law and force unto themselves, the name itself has a stunning, magnetic drawing power which attracts a unique breed of fan who is easily detectable by his/hers dedication that transcends any other known form of loyalty and is almost comparable to the fanataicsm of The Moonies!

As long as the basic core of the group remains, along with the musical format, you can be assured that this individual restless breed will be out in its mass ready to salute their satanic saviours – the merchants of menace – with the acknowledged universal sign.

Betcha Winston Churchill didn't know what he would trigger off when on that fateful day he made his 'V for Victory' gesture of peace! For once thrust into the maniacal mitts of former thief and total rabscallion Ozzy Osbourne, it became the generally accepted universal symbol and international language for the followers of the World's Premier HM band.

Since 1968, Sabbath have been responsible for producing that ear bending powerchord thrash that is continually being rediscovered (last resurfacing under the ridiculous Alphabetti Spaghetti guise of NWOBHM) and has constantly pulled a solid support which is unique to this type of music. So what's the secret of their success?

How come they've outlasted all the other contenders who have merely frazzled out with the bruning intensity of a returning Soviet reconaissance satelite or just died of old age or/and inert lethargy?

Why does their music sound farm fresh while anything else from that era is as dated as a threepenny bit?

To find out you would probably have to read a thesis on the subject, produce a graph or feed facts into a computer. The final move would probably result in a terminal short circuit due to the sheer simplicity of the solution.

To these eyes Sabbath are just a mirror reflection of a need they cater to. They produce and provide a style of music with a rank dedication and outright honesty that other groups have attempted and miserably failed to emulate. An audience may be eager, but it is not totally gullible.

When recently asking the remaining original members, Geezer Butler and Tony Iommi, why they feel the song 'Black Sabbath' has sustained its initial impact after all these years, they provided an answer which probably explains the mystery of their lasting power.

Geezer: "I think it's because the song is so different to anything else, there's no other song that sounds like it except 'Planets' or something like that – a classical piece. That's the only number I still love playing live out of the old material."

Using the sounds of the composers as a metaphor is not the pompous ranting of an egomaniac, bacause there's no doubt that 'Sabbath' has the same qualitiies which can be found in any piece that outlasts its creators and time of creation, remaining shielded and insular from the toll of time.

'Black Sabbath' was a major turning point in the groups career and an achievement they will never forget, although at the same time one can be almost certain when they first played it (with much apprehension!) neither audience nor band could have known they were witnessing a historic event.

Iommi recalled the occasion, which is now indelibly scarred on his memory circuit.

"The number was THE major influence on our musical direction. We didn't plan to go about it that way, it just sort of came about. I'll never forget the first night we played it in Litchfield at a pub called The Pokey Hole. In those days there were very few places to play; just pubs or the blues club (the latter being Henry's, a location that played a key part in the groups birth and evolvement in their formative years – but more about that later on in the sketch).

"The reaction was incredible! The audience went nuts 'cause the rest of the set was twelve bar stuff and we thought let's try and see how it goes."

This was the deciding factor which acted as a catalyst for the group to change their monicker from the basic implications of Earth to the more sombre, picturesque Black Sabbath, when only uttered faintly, could strike an ominous chord in even the most stable/solid mortal heart.

All this is jumping the gun, which had it's barrel cocked and loaded a couple of years before when Terence 'Geezer' Butler who played in a group fronted by Johnny 'Ozzy' Osbourne were in search of a drummer, which unexpectedly led to a chance meeting with Iommi and the start of a partnership that was to last longer than either party could ever have imagined.

Geezer: "Tony was at Jimmy Phillips house, Jimmy being our supposed slide guitarist. Ozzy knew Tony from schooldays and it just started from there."

Tony at the time was playing in a band called Mythology with Bill Ward, a group that had already built quite a powerful reputation in the Carlisle area, which proved to be quite useful to Sabbath in their early years.

Going under the absurd guise of Polka Tulk (the name of a local Indian clothing emporium) the band went around in search of the elusive gig.

Tony: "There was nowhere to play in those days, it was all soul stuff. We HAD to go to Carlisle to get some work."

With a set that mainly consisted of blues workouts, plus a dash of Cream thrown in for good measure, Polka Tulk promptly changed their name to Earth within about a week. They received their initial push from Mythology's agent, but even that didn't help in a climate that was suffering from an immense shortage of venues.

Tony: "We went up to Carlisle and stayed there in a caravan. We didn't do any gigs in Birmingham at all, in fact the next place we went to was Germany, just Europe and stuff. The name Earth was Bill's idea and we kept it until we turned up at a gig and found out there was another group called Earth . . . the hard way!"

Geezer: "That was when we came back from Germany and we turned up at this venue that was a realy dicky bow tie job. When the promoter saw us he said 'Right I'm knocking five quid off your fee'. We thought we were only getting twenty, which was our normal price, and he thought we were getting thirty, so we ended up with five quid on top!"

Tony: "I'll never forget when we walked into the gaff all scruffy, he immediately threw us off. And then another 'bloke' came up and said he liked our single and we said 'Oh Thanks!' We had no f★★king single!!! We were setting our gear up and this guy was going on about our record and all that business and we were thinking 'what's he on about?'

"Then we finally realised they had the wrong band. The bloke told us not to play 'cause if we did we'd probably only last about five minutes and the audience would probably kill us."

It was during this period that the band picked up their first manager, a jazz trumpeter by the name of Jim Simpson who apart from playing with a group called Locomotive (who scored a minor chart hit in the sixties with their adaptation of ska chestnut 'Rudi's in Love') also owned a pub/club which proved to be a useful outlet for the Sabs music.

If you want to find out more about Simpson and other managerial involvements you should pick up a copy of Chris Welch's book 'Black Sabbath' (Proteus £4.95) as it's not really our intention of dwelling on that aspect of the band's history.

As important as it is, it has very little to do with their musical output, and overall is just a depressing series of spaghetti junction like legal wrangles that would only bore and upset anyone with the slightest inclination of getting involved in this business.

The next major move came when the group decided to change their name, which was partly due to the fact that by now there were a couple of bands sharing the monicker, but mainly because of the new song which was now firmly implanted into the set and, as mentioned before, receiving a frothing response from onlookers.

By now the group had established a firm footing oop North and the next obvious step was to enter the Capital which they did, soon to find out the streets weren't exactly paved with gold. London didn't exactly welcome Sabbath with open arms.

Geezer: "Nobody wanted to know us at all."

Tony: "We had to make it in Europe before we got any chance of playing London. Nobody wanted to know and then the big chance we had was the Marquee and we completely fucked up (being due to a slight altercation between Bill Ward and a certain John Gee who happened to be quite an influential force in the club). Ric Lee (of Ten Years After fame) got us that gig."

London's clubland wasn't quite ready for an onslaught from the Sabs and judging from Geezers account the boys weren't quite ready for sophisticated razzamatazz of Londinium.

Geezer: "The thing was we were in Carlisle the night before and had to drive throughout the night and nobody had any clothes in them days. We used to wear trousers made out of car seats and

Ozzy had his dad's cow gown on which got drenched on the way up and which Tony set fire to on the way down.

"Ozzy wouldn't shut up playing his harmonica and we'd been up in the van driving through the night to get to London and he started playing his harmonica about six o'clock in the morning, driving us all nuts! We had a spare can of water because the van kept breaking down and we tipped it all over him so he had to wear his pyjama top!

"Then he knicked the top of a tap and he had that round his neck on a piece of string. I think the tap is where the cross came from, the top of the tap was one of those turn ones and it was the shape of a cross and it sort of went from there."

Tony: "In London when we went to the Marquee we'd have to try and find the smartest out of us to go in first, so they'd let us in. The first time we ever went to see the club, as we walked in, the bloke went 'Look at the state of you lot' and it got worse as we came in, . . . Bill was at the end!"

You may now gather that the lads also had a hard time convincing record companies of their worth A&R men weren't exactly clamouring over each other cheque book in hand eager to sign this lot!

Geezer: "It was bloody hard enough to get gigs; what we used to do was go and pick clubs that Jeff Beck was playing, because he was renowned for not turning up. We'd bring all our guitars and amps with us and the bloke would get fed up waiting for Beck and he'd say 'is there any band can come up and play?' and we'd go 'yeah!' cause we had the van outside – that's how we got our gigs!"

Eventually their agency managed to persuade the record companies to see the group perform.

Tony: "We were playing at Henry's club and we had various people come up and see us . . ."

Geezer: " I remember a pub we had to go to about ten o'clock in the morning in London and this bloke came round to see us, can't remember his name; he's dead now . . . he's the guy that accepted us with Vertigo. Initially they tried to get us to do what they wanted, all this commercial junk, and they'd only have us if we did their single."

Tony: "And the deal was real shit, it was like nothing."

Geezer: "Fifty quid advance!"

Tony: "But then again all we were interested in was just getting a record deal to give us the chance to play. So we got fifty quid advance which is more than we ever had, but to us it was a lot of money then."

The first album, simply titled 'Black Sabbath', took only a matter of days to record but still managed to capture a raw, vital sound that has been lacking since the days of the edge in rough house blues bands like John Mayall et al.

Released on the then highly innovative Vertigo label, the scene was just exciting from the dreaded Woodstock era and the music coming out was still a throwback from lysergically soaked days of hippydom.

So it's hardly surprising that there was a large pocket of punters ready to accept the mayhemic incantations that were rampant on this highly charged debut. Initially backed by the group's hardcore following in Carlisle and Workington the word soon spread and the band's satanic invitation soon bust out nationwide.

Geezer: "The first album was done in two days and 'Paranoid' was done in five days."

Tony: "It was funny because on the first album we were leaving to get a boat to Germany and so we did all the numbers in one take. 'Warning' (a deviation on an old Aynsley Dunbar Band workout) was a long number and we done it this can . . .

Geezer: "There's a track on the first album called 'NIB' which originated from the fact that Bill had this funny beard and his face looked like a pointed nib, so we called him nibby. It was a great joke for us all to call it 'NIB' but then a kid came up to us after our first show in America and he says 'Why did you write a song about 'Nativity In Black'?' I thought 'what?'

This kid was convinced that's what 'NIB' stood for and totally believed it was about satanism . . . so I said 'Oh yeah, that's right' and the bloody thing stuck from there."

Tony: "We met some right f★★king idiots, I'll tell you!"

Geezer: 'Memphis was about the worst when that bloke tried to sacrifice Tony."

Tony: "Oh yeah, it was an open air gig and when we got to our dressing rooms there was a cross on the door in blood! We didn't think much of it really, kicked the door down and went in! But when we were on stage this bloke came on to stab me for some reason – dunno what I'd done to him! But he got past security and it was the time me amps were playing up.

"I was really pissed off, I turned around and kicked me amps over and walked off. As I was walking off there was this bloke behind me with a knife!"

Geezer: "He whizzed past me, blazing away with this big knife and got about halfway before the security guys got him. We refused to carry on after that; we couldn't anyway because Tone had smashed all his amps!

"Then they had to get us out of there while the kids were going nuts, and when we got back to the hotel there were millions of kids – like a whole coven of them – and they got in through the fire escape."

Tony: "They were on our floor, all with black candles!"

The 'Paranoid' album was originally titled 'War Pigs' but the name was changed after complaints from American radio stations. It was 1970, the year Sabbath first ventured across the waters, so they didn't want to rub the Yanks the wrong way. It was too late to change the artwork of the sleeve though, which features a blurred vision of some future deviation of a kamikaze warrior.

The change of name was also due to commercial reasons, for at the last minute the group laid down a two minute track (which by all accounts took the same amount of time to write) that would mark a turning point in their career.

Whether the story about Ozzy asking Geezer (who at that time wrote the majority of the lyrics) what 'Paranoid' meant are true, his vocal delivery on this HM top twenty opus made the song one of the greatest teen anthems of all time and the Sabs still HAVE to include in their set to this very day.

Geezer: "We still have to do it because people would feel cheated if we didn't. We tried to drop it on one tour but it was ridiculous – we had to put it back in."

By now the group had changed management which in turn led to more realistic record deal and things were on the move at a pace that wouldn't let up until their demise.

The group were initially set to go over to the States in July 1970, but this was swiftly put back to September due to their Satanical reputation which had now become of international interest.

Geezer: "We were originally going to go in July but then the Charles Manson thing happened and the agency wouldn't let us go over so we had to postpone until the whole thing blew over, because of all that Black Magic."

Roger Morton

once and cocked it up, so they said 'one more try and that's it we're gonna have to accept it'."

Geezer: "We had to do it live in the studio, Ozzy had to sing while we were playing."

Tony: "The funny thing is that it didn't seem quick in them days, it seemed like a year".

Right from the first album, people began to read mystical connotations into the band's music. The garbage press described them as 'Satanists' while the music papers could only translate this exciting primevil sound as being 'dumb and inane', accusations that didn't let up until recent years,

Everyone tried to put a label on

In fact right from their inception the Sabs were easy targets for all sorts of characters and found themselves constantly harangued by one organisation or another.

Geezer: "The first time it happened was the Stonehenge thing. We were asked to play Stonehenge and we just didn't want to know, so these people said they were going to put a curse on us.

"Then the big Chief Witch of that time, Alex Saunders, called us up and said that these people were really serious about putting a curse on us and told us to wear crosses. He claimed he was going to put a protective spell around us for as long as we wore the crosses."

2. MASTERS OF METAL ECSTASY

Paul Canty/LFI

BY THE time Black Sabbath released the 'Master Of Reality' LP in the summer of '71, their popularity was rapidly increasing on both sides of the Atlantic. In the States, the album went gold on advance orders and consequently there was a good deal of roadwork to be done over there. However, as the Sabs were becoming more and more successful, the pace of life in the fast lane soon caught up with them.

A series of British dates had been lined up for November but at the last moment these had to be postponed until the New Year – Bill were suffering from mental and physical exhaustion, Tony had flu and Ozzy had contracted laryngitis. The band decided to rest over Christmas, but by the beginning of January they were back in London to start work on a new album.

"The last year has been so hectic," said Geezer during one of the recording sessions, "perhaps the worst so far. Our way of working is very exhaustive, and we ended up completely wrecked, shattered. The strain of it just built up, both the work and always being away from home. There always seemed to be another hotel door to open somewhere. Also, there was the strain of keeping up the standards expected.

"It wears you down and both Bill and I have had periods of depression. The travelling in America really gets me down. The trouble is, because we have been so busy with no time to think, when you stop it brings you down. I'm only now getting back to normality."

After a few weeks in the studios, Sabbath embarked on their re-arranged UK tour, kicking off with a gig at Birmingham Town Hall on January 24. Dates ran through to mid-February and included a special charity show in Carlisle, where the group had made their very first appearance as Black Sabbath, as well as a concert at London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall. The tour was extremely successful, although the last two nights in Sheffield and Bradford had to be rescheduled after Ozzy had gone down with flu and another bout of laryngitis.

March '72 saw the Sabs back in America and this time they succeeded in making a stronger dent on the West Coast market – on previous outings, response had been better on the East Coast. "We got a really nice reaction at the Auditorium in San Francisco," claimed Bill Ward towards the end of the tour. "In fact it was one of the best American gigs we've done so far. The last time we were there was good, but nothing like it was this time."

Bill also spoke enthusiastically about Sabbath's next studio venture and revealed that the probably title for the LP would be 'Snowblind'. "It'll have more variation in it and it's certainly going to be the best things we've ever put down on record. We did some of the backing tracks in London but we'll be recording the rest of the material and mixing it in Los Angeles at the Record Plant. The atmosphere in the studios is really good, it's a whole different trip to recording in England. Everything's much more relaxed and unhurried."

The drummer's only complaint about America was over the food, which he described as being "bloody terrible!". Upon completion of the US dates, Sabbath returned to Britain for a brief break before finishing off the album. Recording was due to start at the beginning of June, but on the eve of the band's departure Ward was rushed to hospital.

"I don't know what's wrong with him," claimed Tony, "but I heard he's had all these convulsions. I haven't seen him yet myself. It's a drag – I was all ready to go this evening."

Bill was later diagnosed as having hepatitis and it was also reported that Geezer had gone into hospital with kidney trouble. According to Iommi, the pressures of constant touring were to blame. "It gets very tiring hopping around from place to place. It's like you've just come out of a mangler, everybody's usually ill. It's the food and travelling around – it all builds up."

The guitarist also offered more hints as to the nature of the material planned for the next LP. "Well there's one with acoustic guitars and organ, it's like a romantic tune. We wrote it about a place called Laguna Beach and it's called 'Laguna Sunrise'. And there's another one that we use piano and mellotron on. But the rest of it's all back to the row, noise and rabble . . ."

The record finally emerged in September '72 and was titled simply 'Sabbath Vol 4'. It seems that the band's record company rejected the name 'Snowblind' because of its nasal connotations! The tune 'Tomorrow's Dream' was issued as a single in Britain, but there were no immediate plans for a UK tour. Once again, the Sabs had heavy Stateside commitments.

Ozzy commented: "I regard the States as my factory. I go there to clock on, and after clocking off I came home to rest. When I'm on tour in the States I'll stop to call home and they'll say 'Where are you?' I say I don't know and they don't believe me. The whole thing does terrible things to your mind, the distances are so great that you don't only lose all track of time you also don't know where you are."

The Sabs frontman was evidently happy with the way 'Vol 4' had turned out and hailed it as "our first proper album". Press reaction was far from favourable though and in one review a journalist stated: "This is Sabbath's fourth album and they seem to have made little progress since the

first . . .' The fans obviously took little notice of the media and the record soon became the band's best-selling effort to date.

Ozzy also hinted that Geezer had plans for a solo LP. "I think he's going to do his solo album soon. He's a fantastic lyricist and he does nearly all our song words. He hasn't exactly said what type of stuff he'll be doing but I'm sure it will be fantastic."

Geezer's own LP has still yet to appear and one would imagine that he's never really had the time to do it. When 'Vol 4' was released the Sabs went back to America but unfortunately their touring plans were severely disrupted as Ozzy suffered yet more vocal problems.

He lost his voice on the second day of the tour," explained Tony. "He went to the doctors and had everything to take but then we tried to get back on the road before the doctor said – we did one date and it went again. So then we were off for about ten days."

Sabbath were clearly pushing themselves too much and it wasn't surprising to hear that they intended cutting down on their live appearances in 1973. Iommi recalled: "In the early days we used to go for two months at a time to the States, but now we've cut down to two or three weeks and the next one will probably be only two weeks just doing the major gigs. Who knows, we may even cut down from that."

Asked whether this would be commercially viable, the guitarist replied: "Yes, because you can do five concerts ranging from twenty to a hundred thousand people per concert and people will just come along. They travel hundreds of miles to see a concert."

The band had come back to Britain at the end of '72 and subsequently they allowed themselves a month of inactivity, endeavouring to maintain a relatively low profile. "When we finish a tour we all go home and live different lives," stated Tony. "But the hassle of being known can really be bad sometimes. People find out the phone number of where you live and although it's nice to talk to the people, they don't understand you've just been doing a tour and all you want to do is relax."

After the break, Sabbath announced their plans for a March tour of Britain. There were to be seven dates at major venues and the Rolling Stones mobile was to be used for an intended live LP. As soon as tickets went on sale they were immediately snapped up by the fans and the concert at London's Rainbow Theatre sold out in just four hours.

The tour was another total success and the band's set revolved around the 'Vol 4' album, together with older standards and a brand new song titled 'Killing Yourself To Live'.

By May, the Sabs were back in America and as far as future vinyl output was concerned, Geezer commented: "We've got a lot of ideas for the next studio album and we'll probably get that out towards the end of this year."

The next British appearance for the band was on August 2 at Alexandra Palace, part of the London Music Festival, and they were supported by Groundhogs and Stray. Over the past few months the Sabs had been working on the next studio record, to be titled 'Sabbath Bloody Sabbath', and shortly after the Alexandra Palace show Geezer spoke about the new elpee and explained how it was very much a progression from its predecessor 'Vol 4'.

"We all thought that album was a big change," assessed the bassist. "Again it took a fair time to record but we learnt a lot. It was something different from the usual old Sabbath type stuff and when we finished it we thought, yeah that's OK. If you come out of the studio feeling confident that you put down some good stuff you naturally get pretty pleased when you want to improve musically, which we were at the time. After 'Master Of Reality' we started getting back into really playing music for its own sake.

"The things we got from doing that album have been developed on this one. We had an orchestra working on it again, Tony's playing a lot more piano and Ozzy's got a mellotron which he drives everybody mad with. We've picked up a lot of ideas from 'Vol 4'. We're also experimenting with things like new guitar and bass sounds which is interesting."

Geezer also told of how the band moved out of Birmingham to the country and that they were finally able to relax a little after the craziness endured on the numerous Stateside outings.

"Living in Birmingham was beginning to drive me mad. I found kids climbing in the windows and hanging around all day and that's the last thing I want when you come back from a tour.

"Moving out of Birmingham also means we've a lot more time to spend on other things. We're all into this thing now where we're spending a lot more time on separate projects and the whole thing is more relaxed. I can write easier because there are no distractions. It's all novelty really because we've never spent a lot of time at home in the past three years and just coming back and being in your own house is a great buzz.

"In the States hotels are endless and it takes you a bit of time to readjust to being back in a house again. It's strange walking up the stairs or just being able to move into different rooms."

Ironically though, it wasn't long before the band returned to the States but according to Geezer they were spurred on by the incentive of playing the new material. After the American tour the band came home and in their management offices, surrounded by gold albums, Ozzy gave a frank interview in which he came across as being somewhat 'dazed and confused' by the ways of the rock world.

"I've just written a song called 'Am I going insane?' that's about the way I'm feeling. I'm very confused because in the last four or five years, my living standards are rising and rising, my whole way of life has changed.

"My whole outlook on people has changed too, not because I wanted it to, but because people have made it. You're isolated. People think you're rolling in money, they don't understand about the tax man and all that. I realise that there are a lot of bastards about. I've been taken to the cleaners about 1,000 times. What can you do when an old friend that you grew up with knocks on your door and says 'Can I borrow £100, I need some money or I'm gonna get thrown out?' "I've very often said OK, but I'm having to change my ways now because it's getting a bit too much."

One senses that Ozzy was fast becoming disillusioned by the music biz. "You look at people on TV when you first start and you think to yourself, 'What a terrific scene!' Then suddenly you're in it, and where you thought everything would be roses, you find you have a lot of hang-ups.

"When you get beyond the usual thing of wondering where the next tin of beans is coming from, then you start to get very insecure, at least that's what I've found. The only friends I've got now are people in the same position as me. The amount of rip-offs I've had . . . unbelievable."

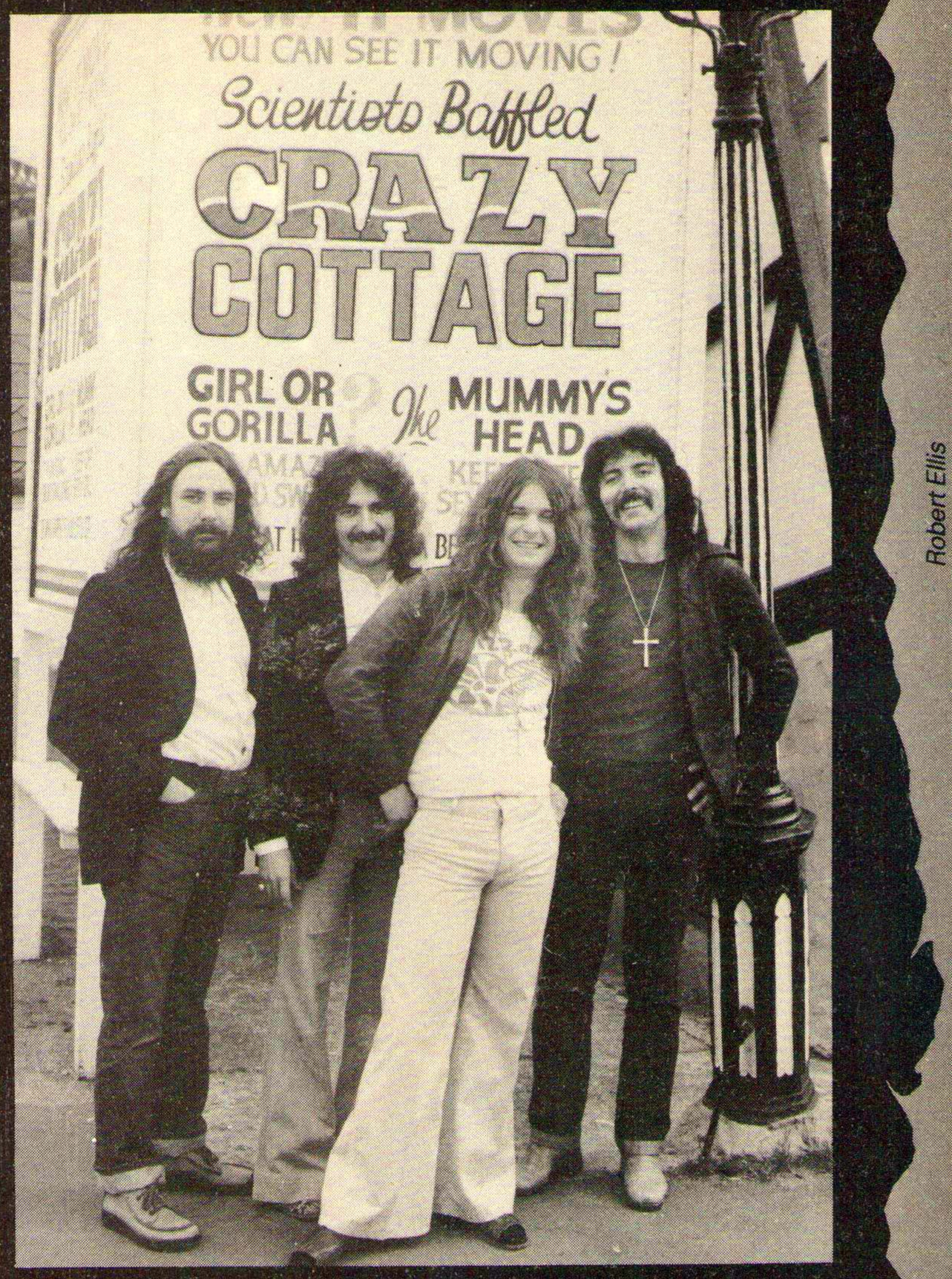
'Sabbath Bloody Sabbath' finally came out in December '73 and to coincide with its release the band set up four British gigs in Newcastle, Bristol, Birmingham and Leicester. The album was well received by the fans but was predictably slagged by critics – 'monotonous pounding songs' wrote one.

Rick Wakeman made a guest appearance on keyboards and it was interesting to listen to the lyrics of the title track which were very much in line with some of Ozzy's interview comments about the way he felt. 'Nobody will ever let you know, when you ask the reason why. They just tell you that you're on your own, fill your head all full of lies . . .'

The beginning of 1974 witnessed the Sabs back in America, where they did excellent business, selling out gigs across the nation. In April they appeared at the massive California Jam on a bill that also featured Deep Purple. By May, Sabbath were back in Britain for an extensive tour of the country.

Once again it was Ozzy who talked to the press and, rather than dwelling on his confusion and disillusionment, he seemd to be fast developing a carefree, 'live for today' attitude towards affairs. A mask for insecurity? Well, maybe, but it was certainly more fun to hear Oz talking humourously in the style for which he has since become renowned.

The lead singer reflected upon his life before Sabbath and spoke



Robert Ellis

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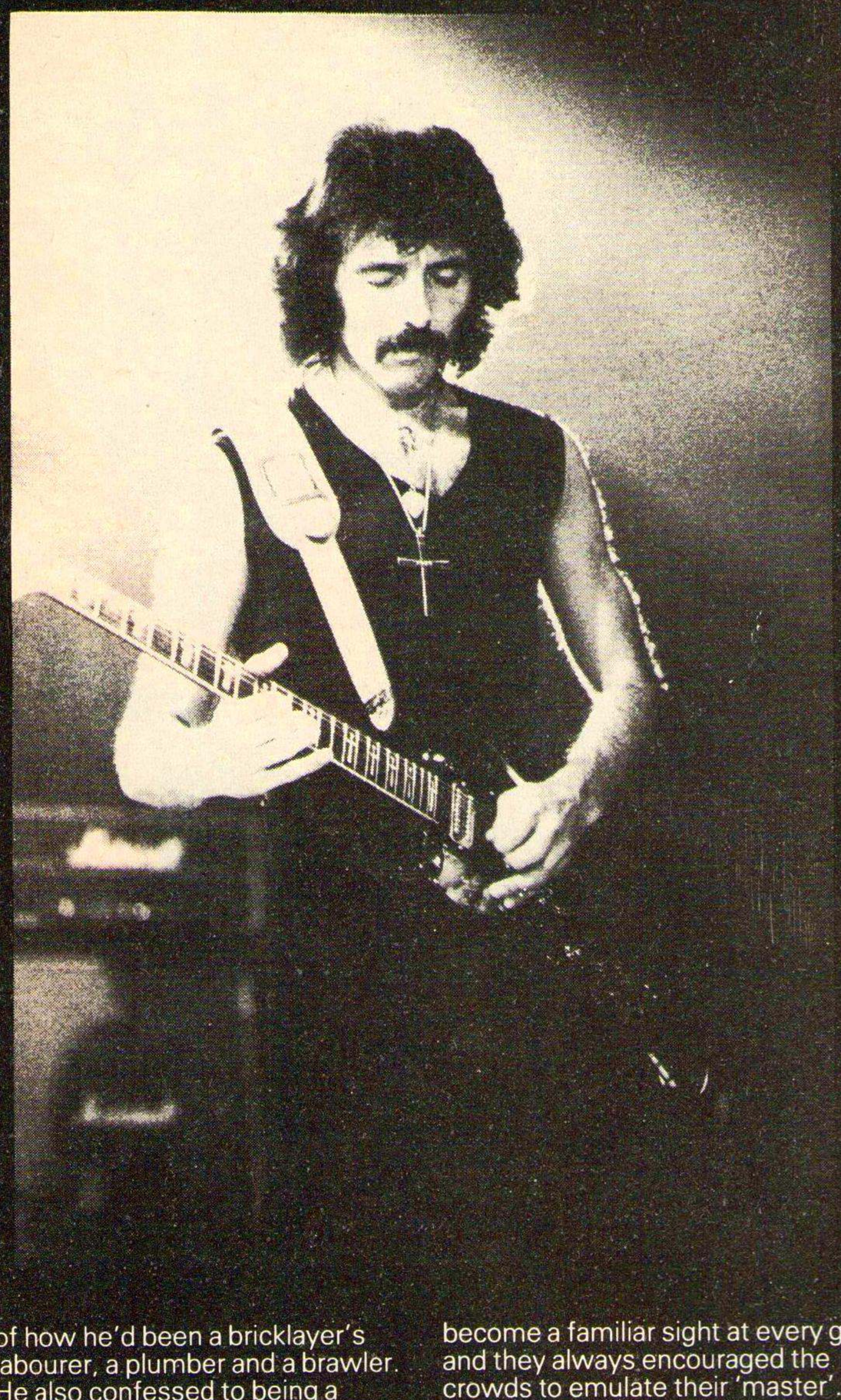


of how he'd been a bricklayer's labourer, a plumber and a brawler. He also confessed to being a 'redundant burglar' and revealed that he once worked with animals . . . a vet's assistant, perhaps? Well, not quite.

"Oh . . . I used to work with animals; I used to kill them!" said Ozzy, remembering a job he'd had in a slaughterhouse. "I was a burglar; I assaulted a police officer and all the rest of that shit but I feel I've achieved a lot . . . I've achieved a lot because I'm honest about myself. And there's so many people who've done a wrong to society who've ended up bettering themselves, but who don't like to think of the past. F**k man, it was the past that made me think the way I do now.

"I joined a band, not to become a rock and roll star, just to travel to see a bit of the world. I didn't even think about making a record. When we made the first album I was just pleased to be able to say 'Look mum, look what I've made – my voice on a piece of plastic forever' . . . that's the whole thing.

"I'm sort of a very highly strung person now because of this, because of the.way it happened – it happened so quickly that I just couldn't take it all in."

Sabbath's continuing success story had turned Ozzy into something of a hero amongst the fans and the power he was able to command over audiences was phenomenal. Already, his legendary 'peace' signs had become a familiar sight at every gig and they always encouraged the crowds to emulate their 'master'.

"I'm throwing out a sign to the people and they're responding to me," assessed Oz. "I think I'm their human aspirin, I'm helping them to get rid of all that inner shit."

As well as becoming a cult figure in the heavy metal world, Ozzy also found himself with a good deal more money than he'd ever had before. However, he couldn't take his new-found wealth seriously.

"I abuse money to extremes because I'm not used to having it still. My obsession is with pound notes – lots of them and for no reason. If it takes my fancy I lay it on somebody. Like I went into Rackhams (the Harrods of Birmingham) once and they gave me the big up and down. I asked how much a Chinese carpet cost and the guy says 'Its a lot of money, sir', sort of half acknowledging my presence and half ignoring me. So I went 'Well how much is it man, that's the question?' '478 guineas'. I says 'Wrap it up and I'll have it'. I paid in cash. He went white!

"I mean that kind of thing's a f**king joke. Just 'cause a geezer like that is selling quality goods to a different class of people – and he's probably only getting twenty quid a week for it – he thinks he can lay a number on maybe some geezer who pushes a broom who might be making twice as much.

"It's just a game at the moment. Everything's toys to me; the f**king things I've bought to amuse myself is unreal, man – pinball machines, bow and arrows and airguns, shotguns, motorbikes, cars . . . I f**king drove my V-12 Jag across my field, man, and f**ked the gearbox up just 'cause I wanted to try a few wheelies . . .

"All I'm doing now is doing everything you'd do if you won the pools. I came from a two-bedroomed terraced house in the middle of a f**king shithole. Pakistanis living all over the place, twelve to a house and Irish fighting outside the pubs . . . six kids in a two-bedroomed house isn't very comfortable."

Despite the fact that his lifestyle had changed, Ozzy still acknowledged that career in rock 'n' roll wouldn't necessarily last forever and declared: "Eventually my lollipop is going to melt and they'll all go to somebody else. I'm a product; I'm a tin of beans y'know? I can't imagine what I'll do when it happens though, it's affected my life so much."

Andy Kent/LFI

After their May/June '74 tour of the UK very little was heard about the Sabs in Britain until they returned from Australia at the end of the year. Then, it was reported that they were due to start recording a new LP in January with a view to a late February release. British, Japanese and American tours were also promised and it was also announced that Sabbath had parted company with their managers, Patrick Meehan and Wilf Pine.

As it turned out, nothing else was heard from the group until May '75 when they finally broke their silence with news of a return to the road in America together with the forthcoming release of their sixth studio LP 'Sabotage'. The US dates kicked off at the beginning of July and the album emerged shortly afterwards. The Sabs spoke to the press about their protracted period of 'hibernation'.

"It hasn't really been a rest," stated Bill Ward, "because whereas before we were concentrating on roadwork, we've been working on a new stage show and recording. I think it's best to go out and give your everything and then go back into hibernation."

Geezer agreed: "Or you get caught in a whirlpool and you don't know what's happening and you get f**ked up. So we come out of it to adjust ourselves, adjust our mentality. We've organised ourselves."

Bill: "It's like starting all over again."

Ozzy discussed the new LP, which was recorded in London's Morgan Studios and in Brussels, and was the band's first release on the Nems label.

" 'Sabbath Bloody Sabbath' was an experiment. It was the first time we'd ever actually produced a record and the first time we had anything to do with the technical side. The new album, 'Sabotage', is

very varied but basically a Sabbath rock album. We've tried to keep it as basic as possible so we can reproduce it on stage but there are a few different things. Like there's an instrumental that Tony wrote where we used the London Chamber Choir. It sounds like one of those epic bloody Ben Hur themes!"

Aside from recording the planning their latest stage creation, one would imagine that Sabbath's extended absence from the scene also had something to do with the numerous business hassles they'd been forced to endure. Certainly, if Ozzy's feelings were to be taken as yardstick, the band had developed a very cynical attitude towards the likes of managers and record companies.

"I think music is the most corrupt, bent, distorted business going," declared the singer, without a hint of subtlety. "Behind the glitter there's a big turd of shit somewhere, because someone has to spoil it. The people have made a beautiful thing into an industry.

"We're going to be in full control of everything now. We have to go through these business trips from time to time because of the financial aspects of it. To put a record out you have to go through these things. You have to sit round a table with a load of dummies who don't know what you're on about. All their interested in is that you sell them pieces of plastic which make them lots of money and they don't give a shit about what you sing – they don't give a shit whether you're standing there clapping your bollocks through the whole album as long as it sells. What we put on a record is part of us."

Bill: "The whole music scene has changed, especially the way groups come up via the club circuits. The way we came up . . . that's all disappeared. You have to do singles."

One thing that hadn't altered though was the media's view of Black Sabbath, and the band continued to be slagged unmercilessly. By now though, the Sabs appeared to be beyond caring about the press and Ozzy remarked: "To be quite honest I've lived with the press slagging us off for such a long time I'm quite used to it. Everyone's got their own opinion and it's them out there (the fans) that matter to me. I'm not just doing it for the press.

"Nobody likes a bad slam. After you've been working all your merry hours in the studio, nobody likes a stab in the back from the press, but I suppose they're critics and if they weren't critics they wouldn't criticise. That's their job – to knock a few holes into things."

The Sabs American trek had commenced in Toledo on July 14 and on the road the line-up was augmented by keyboard player Gerald Woodruffe – incidentally, he played on Robert Plant's 'Pictures At Eleven' LP. The 1975 US dates were unquestionably Sabbath's most triumphant to date and an ecstatic Ozzy Osbourne spoke to Geoff Barton in a telephone interview mid-way through the tour.

"It's really been phenomenal. We've been quite shocked. There've been riots, we've had capacity houses, you'd think we're the Beatles or something."

Despite the Stateside success, Ozzy had begun to question his sanity and proclaimed: "I can honestly say that I'm three-quarters mad. After our 1974 American tour we all ended up in lunatic asylums anyway, because of all the tension, the dope and shit we had in our bodies.

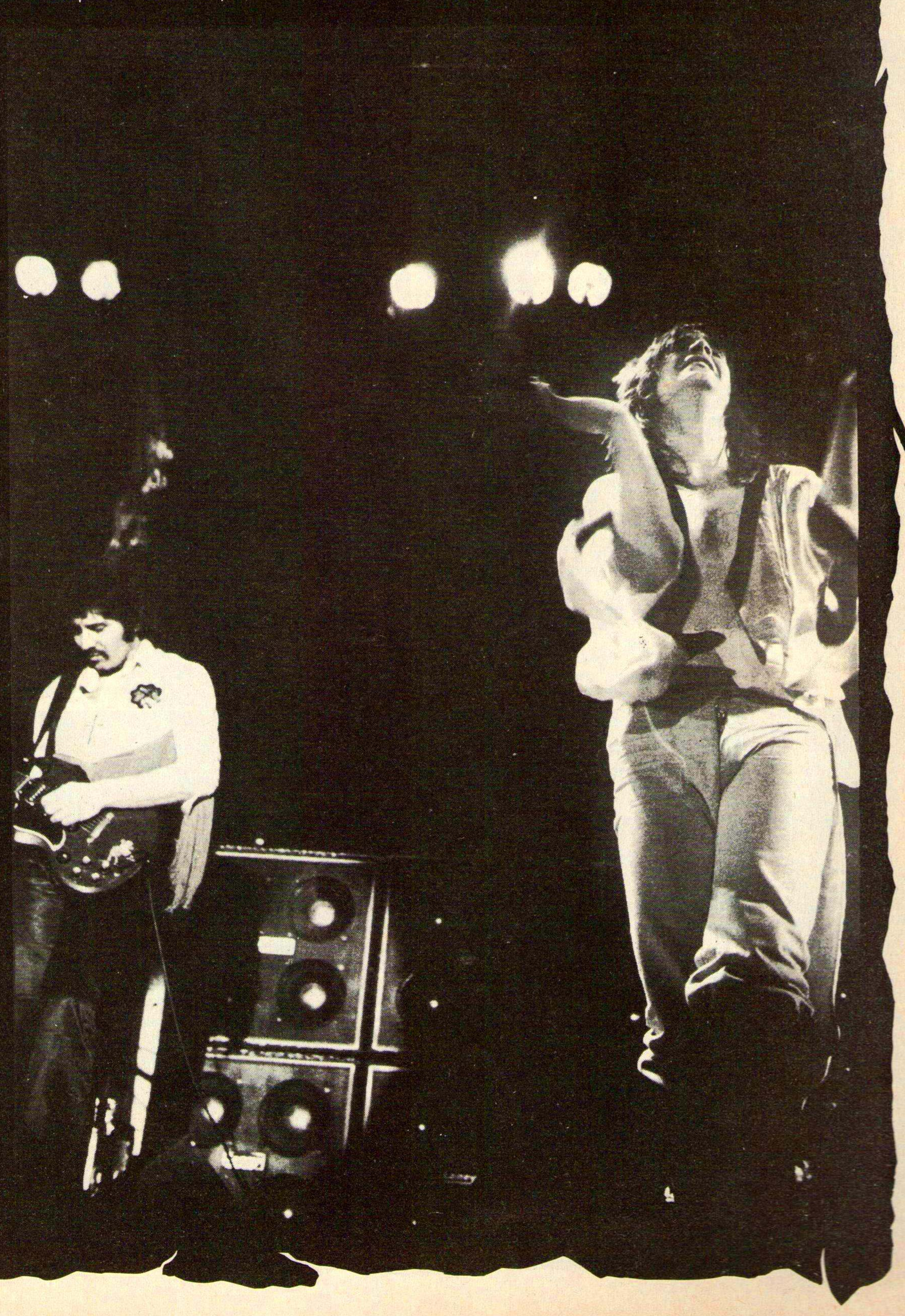
"But I've been visiting a psychiatrist for some time now, though I'm not sure it's doing me much good. He asks such stupid questions, he plays mind games. He asks things like: 'Do you masturbate?' and I say: 'Do you breathe –'

"He replies: 'Yes' so I say 'Well, don't ask such idiotic questions then'. The song 'Am I Going Insance?' (featured on the 'Sabotage' LP) sort of mentions these things – I wrote it some time ago. It's also about a personal thing I once loved, but I now hate. But I don't wish to say anymore. In any case I'm feeling better than ever now. I have my own identity back . . . or have I?"

Ozzy may well have been bordering on the lunatic fringe but the way things were going in America obviously kept him in good spirits. "I'm so into the music again now," he enthused. "Looking back on the past interviews I've done, I've found them to be so depressing. Shit, a while ago I must have been f**ked up on so many things. But that's in the past now, the success of the American tour has me over the moon – it's marked the beginning of a new Black Sabbath. Now that we're handling our own affairs, there's nothing to block our way. If we want to do anything, we're going to go straight out and f**king do it."

While Sabbath had been on the road in the States, a series of autumn dates had been arranged for the UK. Unfortunately though, most of these were later cancelled after Geezer had been injured in a car crash near his home and Ozzy started suffering with his recurring back injury. The British tour was re-arranged for January and subsequently took place without any hitches.

The compilation 'We Sold Our Souls For Rock 'n' Roll' was issued



to tie in with the UK concerts, after which the band planned to take a break. There was no mention of another album, although it seemed likely that it would be a studio record and not the live platter that a lot of fans had been hoping for.

"We do have a live album in the can," said Ozzy, "but I doubt very much whether it'll ever be released now. That is, we certainly wouldn't like to have it made available – all the material's out of date, years old, it just wouldn't be representative. But we're coming to the end of our current recording contract and I believe that's why they're putting out this 'Greatest Hits' album. We don't like the idea very much, but there's nothing we can really do about it."

Assessing the band's current situation, Bill Ward stated: "It's the end of an era. We're going to stop doing our current stage show after the British dates are over. People have been saying that our current presentation has been scrappy and I couldn't agree more – we're more aware of it than anybody. But we split from our management 18 months ago and now we handle all our own affairs. It's difficult enough doing that, without having to worry about how you look playing gigs.

"But as I say, that's going to change. We're taking a few months off soon, we've pulled out of our remaining commitments and we're going to concentrate on professional approach."

In March '76, the band were due to appear in the High Court after action had been brought against them by former manager Jim Simpson. In the end, an out-of-court settlement was arranged and the group paid out £7,500. Patrick Meehan, who had taken over from Simpson, was forced to pay up £35,000. The Sabs announced that they intended to continue managing themselves.

The summer of '76 passed in relative silence and it wasn't until the autumn that the Sabs were back in the news with the announcement of a new studio LP called 'Technical Ecstasy', which they'd recorded at Criteria Studios in Miami. With the emergence of fresh product, the band went back on the road in America (where else?) and in December they revealed that there would be a British tour in March '77.

'Technical Ecstasy' had marked Gerald Woodruffe's first vinyl appearance with Sabbath and during an interview which surfaced in the New Year, Tony Iommi offered his opinion of the album.

"Personally I like 'Ecstasy'. We got very involved with it, saw it all the way through. Most people seemed to think it was a big step from 'Sabotage' and a lot say it's totally different from anything we've done before. I think it's probably the type of album you have to listen to a few times before you really get into it. I don't think it's sort of an instant thing.

"It's better with Gerald now because it gives me more chance to play guitar and do solo parts instead of chords all the time. In fact I'd say things with Sabbath are better than they've ever been really, because the band are really coming out to fight this time.

"You know in the past we've had all these various hangups, management things and all the rest of the junk, but it's like a new lease of life with this album. It's really been a thing where we've all got involved with it and behind it."

Sabbath's 1977 British tour opened at the Glasgow Apollo on March 2 and climaxed with two nights at Hammersmith Odeon. They kicked up the proverbial storm in every town they played and proved that they were still as popular as ever. No doubt about it, Black Sabbath were definitely masters of metal ecstasy . . .

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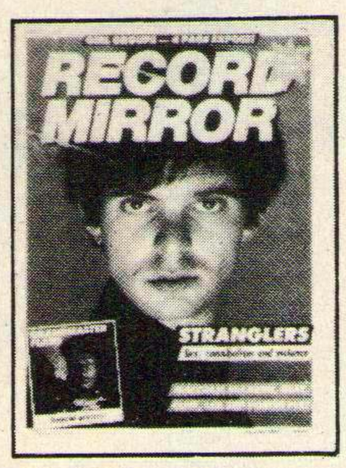

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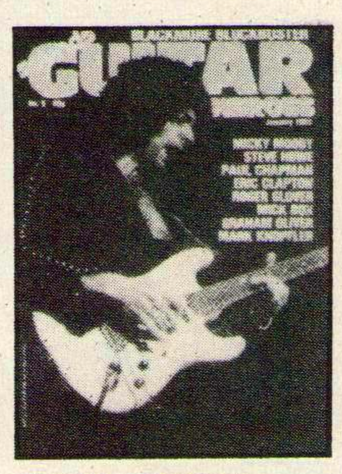

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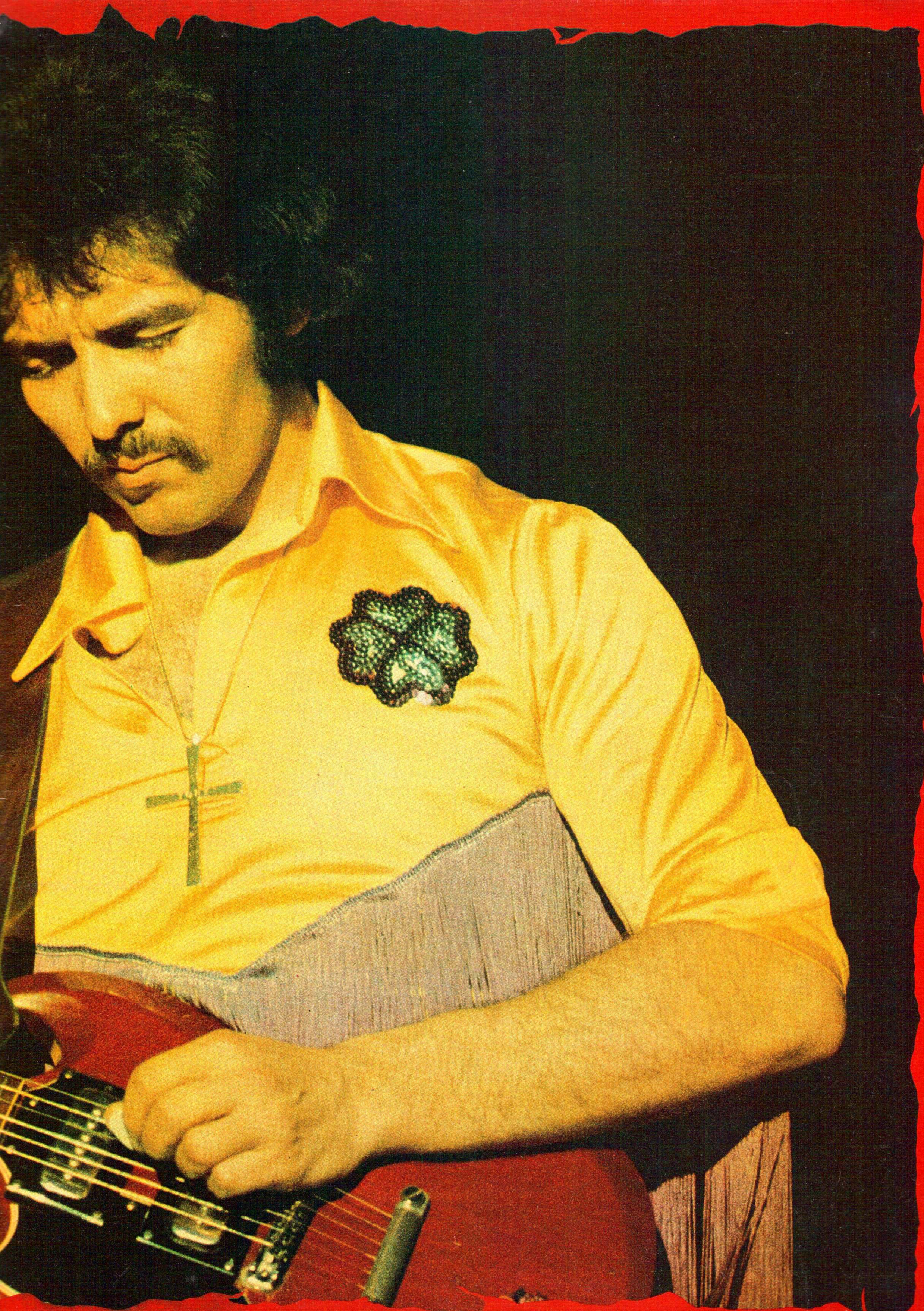


NEVER SAY DIE!

White's New Agency

FOLLOWING THE completion of their 1977 UK tour, the Sabs had decided to leave the country at the end of March and move to America to avoid paying a ridiculous 83% income tax on their earnings. This meant that they were allowed to spend 90 days a year in Britain but they obviously considered it to be a worthwhile sacrifice. Bill Ward was already living in Los Angeles and Ozzy had actually been contemplating a move there for quite some time.

The following month though, rumours began to circulate that Ozzy was intent upon leaving the band. These were swiftly denied and a spokesman for the group declared: "If one member of the group left, it would really be the end of Black Sabbath. But individual members would undertake solo projects however."

Furthermore, it was reported that the next album would probably be a live package and that in the meantime Sabbath were writing a new studio elpee in LA.

But six months later, Ozzy announced that he was quitting the Sabs to pursue a solo career. The three remaining band members had decided to carry on and were set to record their next LP in Canada. Before long, they were back in Britain to rehearse in Wales and revealed that their new lead singer was Dave Walker, who was living in the States at the time and had previously been in Savoy Brown and Fleetwood Mac.

"I feel a bit bewildered," said Walker. "I still can't believe I've come home to my own country to play with old friends from my home town. It's amazing, I feel super happy. It's a real trip."

Dave Walker's debut appearance with the band was on the BBC Midlands TV programme 'Look Here!', afterwhich recording was scheduled to start in Toronto. Ozzy Osbourne had promised to explain why he'd left and, keeping to his word, he gave yet another of his 'candid' interviews at the start of the New Year.

"The beginning of the end for me came just after 'Sabbath Bloody Sabbath'," Oz proclaimed. "I just didn't get off on the last few albums. We couldn't reproduce what we were doing in the studio 'cause it was so overdubbed with 300 voices and all that. Like, Tony would do seven guitar overdubs and I felt like I had to compete in a way to stay part of it, so I could do three vocal tracks . . . it was so bizarre . . . multi-tracking the voice and backward harmonies . . . drowning people's brains with all this scientific bullshit I don't understand.

"I'll tell ya something, and I don't give a shit if I offend anybody, but the last Sabbath album was compared to Queen's 'Night At The Opera' because it was such a big production number. I mean, Queen openly admitted they took a lot of their ambition from Black Sabbath and there we were trying to get off Queen what they were trying to get off us or something! Freaked me out! Why couldn't *we* be leaders anymore?I'll tell ya why. 'Cause we all became so content with it all, so bored that we just got lazy, that's why.

"You know, deep down inside I wanted to leave Sabbath for three years, but I didn't leave 'cause of the loyalty thing. I used to feel inadequate because I didn't play an instrument, and couldn't contribute musically on that level. But what I could do was make it with the audience . . . all they wanna do is get off. They don't sit there and say 'oh look, Tony is playing A minor and b-f-c, whatever the riff is, at 300mph'. All they wanna do is get their rocks off.

"So when I get my new band together, which I'm trying with pain to do right now, all I wanna do is have fun you know? The people who came to see Sabbatth had fun, but the only time I had fun in the end was at the gigs."

Ozzy was purpoed to be forming a band with guitarist Johnny Frazier Binnie and bassist Terry Horbury, from the group Dirty Tricks. He was looking for a drummer and hoped to be able to go back on the road in November.

But by the end of January, Ozzy was back in Sabbath! Dave Walker had apparently left by 'mutual consent' and claimed: "It just wasn't happening. We were supposed to start recording soon but there was no material prepared. I was the singer but there was nothing for me to sing. We split as friends but I feel much better now. I was dreading going to Canada to make the record. I'd rather go back to California and get a band together. It may not make as much money, but I'll certainly be much happier." One senses that there was little love lost between Walker and the Sabs!

Upon his return to the line-up, Ozzy stated: "It's been like a holiday. It's given me a lot of time to think and although I'd been trying to work with other musicians, it was very difficult. After nine years with the same people you get used to things. When they rang up to ask me if I'd come back I knew there was only one answer."

And so the Sabs departed for Canada to start work on their forthcoming album, which was to be called 'Never Say Die'. A British tour was lined up for May, the first date being at Sheffield City Hall on May 16. Within a month every gig had sold out and soon more were added, extending the UK outing through to the middle of June. American rockers Val Halen (who had just released their classic debut LP) were named as the support act and since they were creating quite a stir in metallic circles many predicted that Sabbath would be 'blown off' stage.

However once the tour got underway, it was clear that Sabbath's crown was not to be lifted. Witnessing Van Halen, one felt that the headliners would find it tough to follow such a live-wire set, but seeing the reaction the Sabs elicited from the moment they hit the stage was remarkable. The devotion of their supporters was quite incredible and they appeared to be able to do nothing wrong. Ten years gone . . . and still going strong.

Black Sabbath's 'Tenth Anniversay Tour' continued in America and was equally successful as it had been in the UK. The single 'Never Say Die' had made chart impact during the British gigs but the release of the album had been put back.

It finally emerged towards the end of 1978 and, whilst still on tour in the

White's New Agency

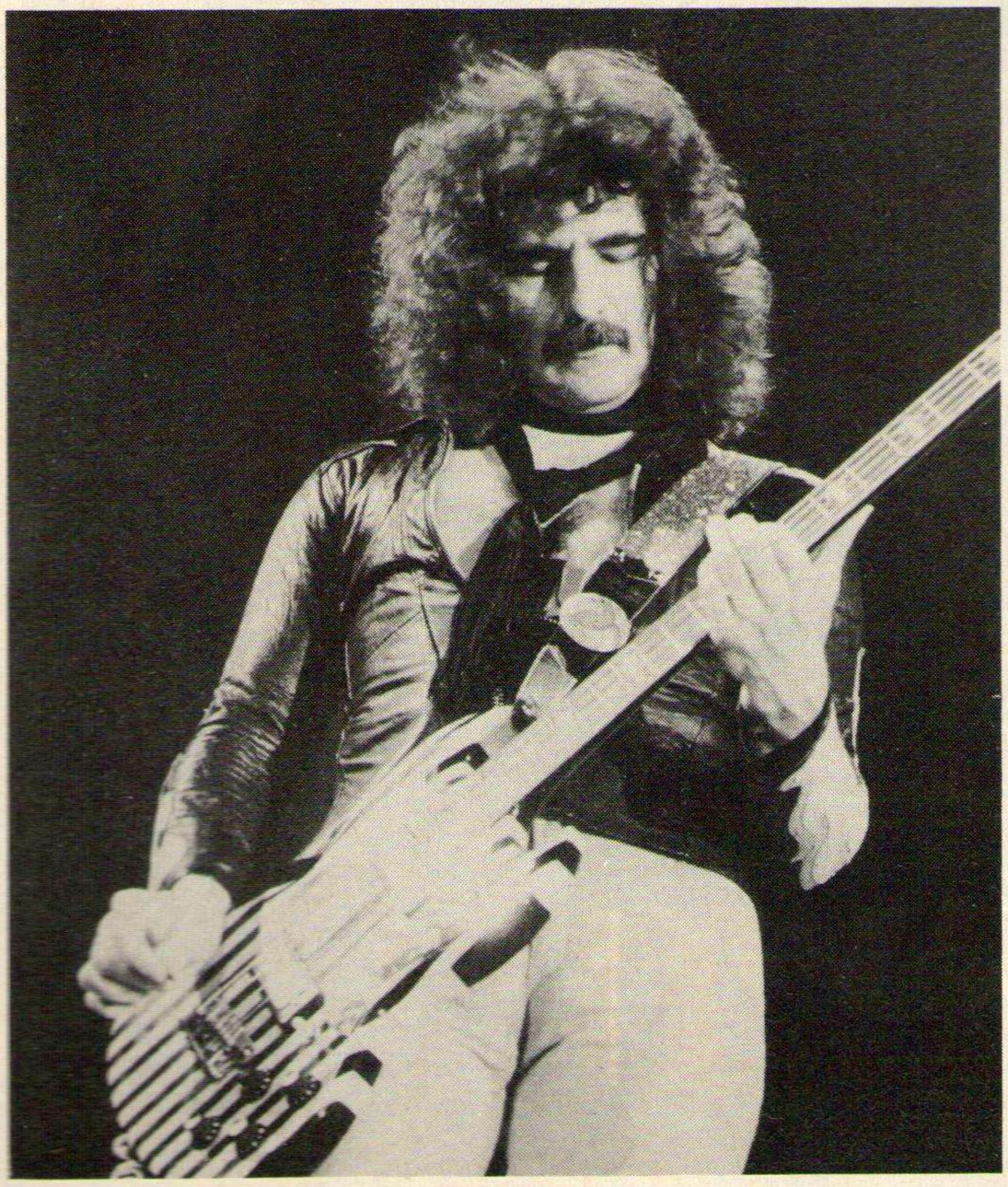
Bill Ward

Robert Ellis

George Bodnar

Robert Ellis

The Sabs with vocalist Dave Walker (above)



Robert Ellis

States, Ozzy explained the reason for its delay. "We had a few internal problems. My father was dying, so that put us out for over three months with the funeral and everything. And of course I left the band for three months before we got back together to record it."

When asked for his opinion of the LP, Ozzy replied: It's a combination of what we've all been through in the last ten years. It's a very varied album. Like, we started out playing in blues clubs because British blues – like John Mayall and early Fleetwood Mac – was the thing at the time. We were into a 12-bar trip and early TYA stuff. So it's part of that sort of trip. Then there's the heavy thing and the rock thing. It's not just steamhammer headbanging stuff all the way through."

Although no-one could deny that Sabbath had become one of the world's leading hard rock attractions, they were still largely ignored and dismissed by the press. They hardly needed to let it get them down but one wonders why they came in for such a hard time.

According to Ozzy: "It's because we're anti-hip and we don't want to know all that crap. For a time I did my damnedest to make these people (journalists) happy, but they took the piss out of me for that. They must think we're dumb. But a lot of people who were writing these things about Sabbath aren't reporting 10 years later. They're sweeping the streets, or they're doormen at some poxy club somewhere.

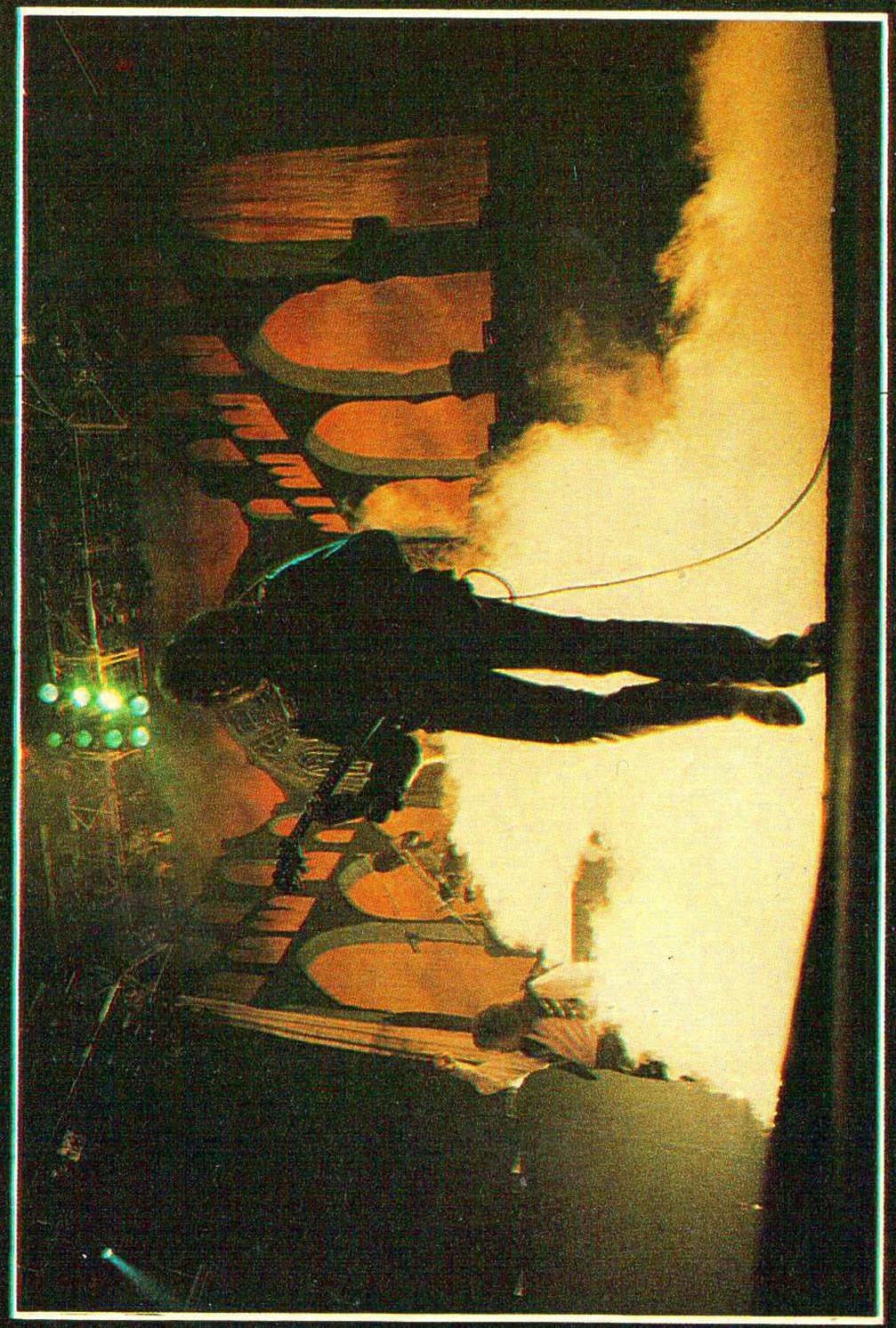
"But I like it now. If they ever start liking us I go, oooh, what's this? There's something wrong here! Better change it and do something heavier!"

Tony Iommi's attitude summed it all up though: "We've been together ten years . . . and we're celebrating everyday!"

BLACK SABBATH

LIVE EVIL

Dennis O'Regan



4. THE SECOND COMING

Denis O'Regan

ALL REMAINED quiet on the Sabbath front once the '10th Anniversary Tour' was over, and it wasn't until June 1979 that their silence was broken by a rumour that Ozzy had quit again. At that juncture the band were in Los Angeles preparing for another Stateside trek and apparently Ozzy had been sent home for a rest and to 'get himself together'.

Former Rainbow vocalist Ronnie James Dio was said to be helping out on a temporary basis, but the Sabs future had begun to look decidely shakey.

The possibility of a complete split was soon fortified by the news that Geezer had decided to quit. 'GEEZER LEAVES SORRY SABS' ran the headline after the bass player had walked out in California and flown back to Britain. Could this be the end?

Evidently not, since Ronnie Dio was then confirmed as the official replacement for Ozzy and Quartz guitarist/keyboard player Geoff Nicholls was drafted into the ranks. Initially, the latter was thought to be taking over from Geezer, but when the bassist subsequently returned it became clear that Nicholls was there to augment the line-up. And so a new Black Sabbath was born . . .

After his departure from the band Ozzy began putting things together for his solo career in LA and he declared: "The last couple of albums were very trying for me. This time it is permanent. It's not like I'm going back at the last minute. I definitely don't want to work with them again. They really have been arseholes . . ."

There'd been talk of a possible 'Farewell Tour' from Ozzy and Sabbath but this was clearly not going to take place now. There was a good deal of bad feeling, particularly on the ex-singer's part, Ozzy certainly didn't give his successor much hope.

"He's a nice guy and he's got a great voice, but if they do go out as Sabbath I think Ronnie Dio is going to have to have a bullet-proof vest if he ever gets up there singing 'Iron Man' and 'Paranoid'. He's really got his work cut out for him. Replacing a singer in a band is the hardest job of all."

The new Sabbath maintained a fairly low-profile until March of 1980 when they announced the release of the 'Heaven And Hell' album, which had been recorded at Miami's Criteria Studios and produced by Martin Birch. Things had obviously worked out well with Dio and Bill Ward was full of praise for the singer.

"For a start he's more intelligent," the drummer reckoned. "Ronnie is a musician, he can arrange a lot better than Oz could, I think he's an excellent singer period. He's got a lot of qualities which Ozzy had as well. He blends perfectly into the band."

'Heaven And Hell' was released on April 18 and was a very impressive hard rock album. But the real test for Sabbath came when they returned to Britain for a series of late spring dates. Judging by the ticket sales, there was still plenty of interest in the band and in the end they actually sold out four nights at London's Hammersmith Odeon.

The final verdict? Well naturally there were those who would never accept a Black Sabbath without Ozzy Osbourne being in it, but for the major part the fans warmed to Ronnie Dio. He still had a healthy following from his days with Rainbow and no doubt the top-notch quality of 'Heaven And Hell' had done him a lot of favours.

The UK tour was generally acclaimed as a triumph for the Sabs and was marred only by the cancellation of a few dates after Bill Ward had caught viral pneumonia.

In July '80, Nems released the highly dubious 'Live At Last' elpee, which comprised in-concert records from around 1973/74. The band were furious at its output (and with good reason!) and decided to take court action against their old record company.

The album was temporarily withdrawn from the shops but in the end it proved impossible to prevent its distribution. The following month saw the re-emergence of 'Paranoid' as a single and once again the song was a hit.

In the meantime, Black Sabbath were back in the States for an extensive nationwide trek. They were now being managed by Sandy Pearlman, who also handled Blue Oyster Cult, and he had come up with the idea of sending both acts out on the road together was a double-page package under the banner of the 'Black and Blue' tour.

Things appeared to be going well for the Sabs – concerts were selling out and their album was making solid chart impact – but then suddenly Bill Ward left the group. He was swiftly replaced by ex-Derringer drummer Vinnie Appice and it wasn't long before the Sabs were gigging again.

Ozzy, who had just gone on the road with his new Blizzard of Ozz

Simon Fowler/LFI

Robert Ellis

Denis O'Regan

Denis O'Regan

outfit, laughingly referred to them as 'Geezer Butler and the three Italians!'.

The 'Black and Blue Tour' ran through the autumn of 1980 and towards the end of October messrs Gett and Makowski flew to New York to witness the Madison Square Gardens show. Upon arriving in the Big Apple it became evident that things had not been running as smoothly as one might have expected on the tour and that the two bands weren't getting along especially well, their roadcrews at logger heads with each other.

Sabbath headlined the New York concert (the two groups had been alternating the top-of-the-bill slot depending upon their popularity in certain areas) and although it wasn't exactly a fantastic performance, it was none the less one hell of an experience to witness the band on American soil in front of 20,000 half-crazed Yankee metal fanatics.

It was Ronnie's debut appearance at the hallowed Madison Square and after the show he said: "To tell you the truth, although I always dreamnt about playing the Gardens since I was young, I felt myself more nervious before I went on stage at Glasgow, Newcastle or in fact anywhere in Britain than tonight. In general I find the kids in Britain are so much more into the show, they put much more into it . . . the whole ritual. And they are also much more critical which is why I respect them and love playing for them."

Ronnie Dio had now been a fully-fledged member of Black Sabbath for over a year and he was clearly satisfied with the way things had gone.

"When I first met Tony and we started writing, it was great," he reflected, "but it was almost too good to be true. In some ways it reminded me of my early days with Ritchie Blackmore. Tony, like all lead guitarists, has an ego but he's still very donw to earth and I feel we'll be writing together for a long time. I think the whole group is much happier than it's ever been before. I know I am."

The singer also explained the reason for Bill Ward's departure. "Bill had already left the band a couple of times earlier this year, and we sympathised as he had suffered some very heavy personal losses (Bill's mother and father had died in 1980) and we managed to pull him back in. But eventually, it became too much for us and for him.

"He couldn't cope with being on the road anymore and his drinking got out of control and we just couldn't rely on him anymore. Which along with all the other things going down on this tour added to the tension. In the end we both came to a mutual realisation and decided to part company on the best of terms. Everybody in the group still loves the man dearly. It's hard not to, and we wish him all the best in the future."

When the 'Black and Blue Tour' had finished, the Sabs flew off for a brief series of Japanese concerts. However, during their Far Eastern venture Geezer broke a finger whilst practising Kung Fu, and so the band's forthcoming British dates had to be put back a few weeks.

The UK tour finally kicked off with a four-night stand at Hammersmith Odeon in January 1981 and ran through until the first week of February. With no fresh vinyl product, the set wasn't dissimilar to the previous year's but Sabbath still had little difficulty in pulling the crowds.

The rest of the year evidenced another protracted period of silence that was finally broken by the appearance of a new Sab song, entitled 'Mob Rules', on the soundtrack album of the animated sci-fi movie 'Heavy Metal'. Eventually 'Mob Rules' turned out to be the title of the new Sabbath studio LP which surfaced at the end of 1981 and marked Vinnie Appice's vinyl debut with the band.

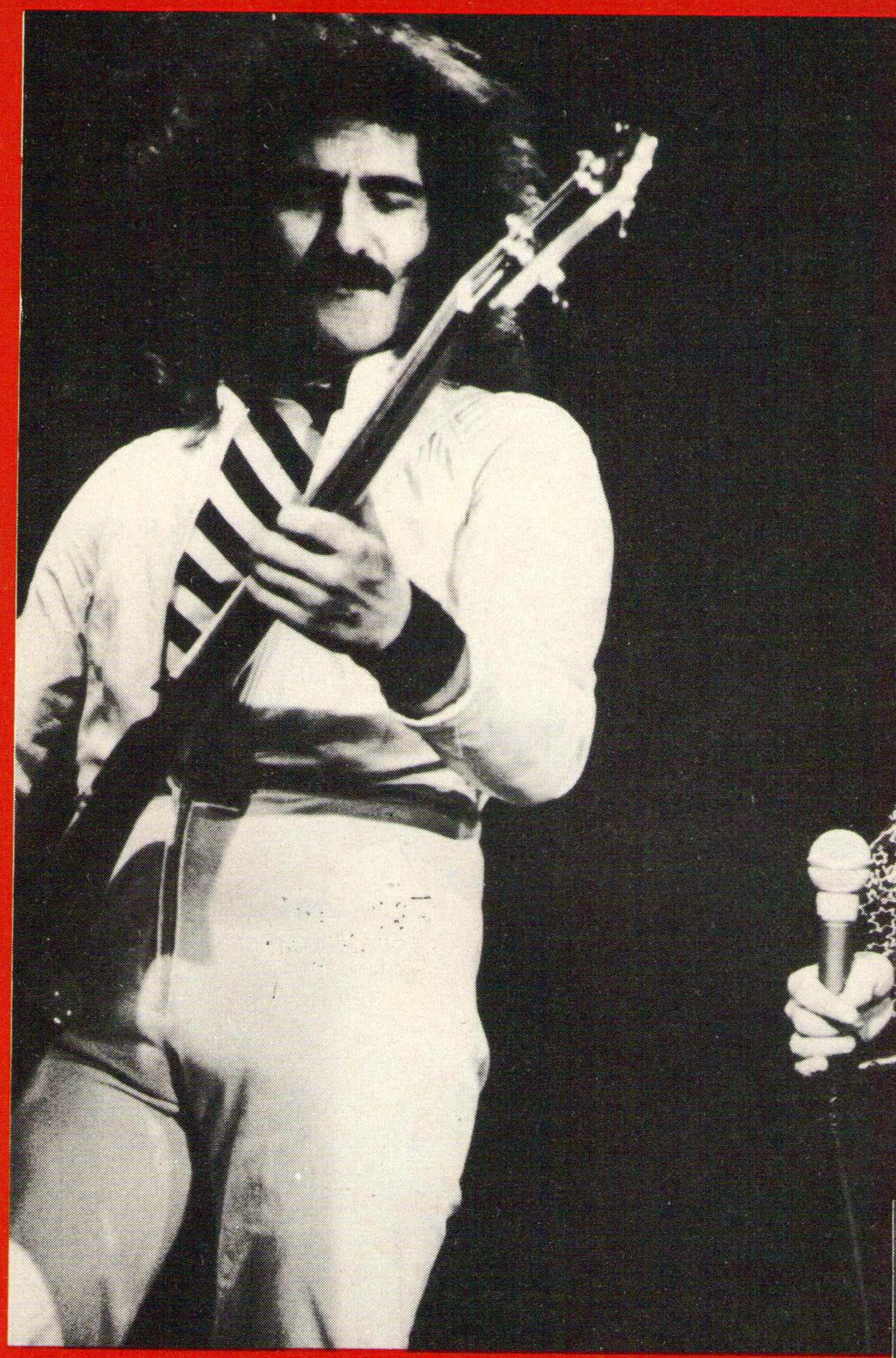
Coinciding with its release, the group began an American tour which lasted until Christmas. They came back home for a shork break and then saw the year out with the start of a British tour.

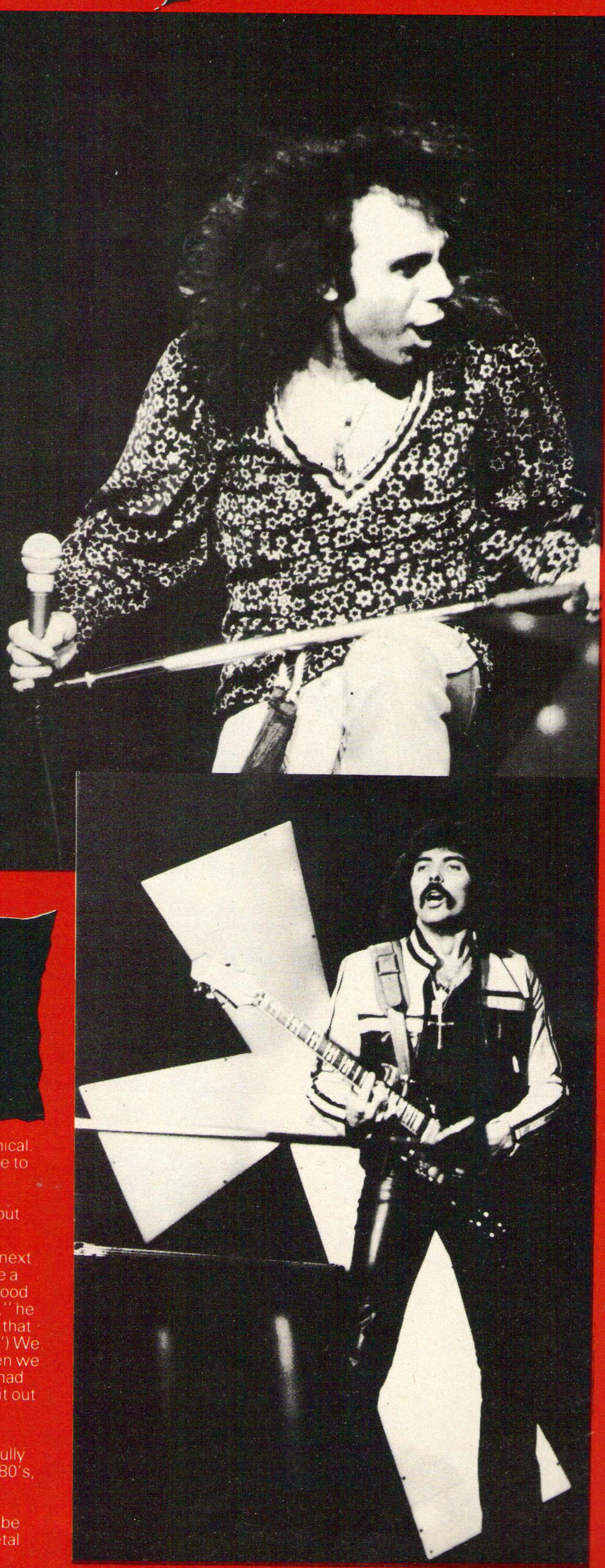
Once again the first shows were at Hammersmith Odeon and after the second night an extremely weary-looking Tony Iommi talked about the current 'Mob Rules' platter in his tune-up room.

"The material on the new album has gone a little bit adrift from the original Sabbath style," assessed the axeman, "and the songs are more uptempo. We find that recording is a lot easier nowadays and is much quicker than it has been before. There's a lot more overall involvement, especially with Ronnie being in the band, and I think it shows in the music. We're feeling more comfortable and working faster.

"At first I think Ronnie didn't venture out too much because he didn't know how he was going to be accepted. Now he's able to put more of his own ideas in and expand on things – in fact we all can.

"Ronnie adds a lot more scope to the music and he's given us a completely new approach. In the





Adrian Boot

past there was always a limit as to how far we could go with the vocals following the riffs. And that's where we came to a stop with Ozzy. We'd come up with ideas and he'd be lost when it came to finding something to sing along with. He had his set way of singing and so we would have to try and make things a bit different using more involved chord structures. Having Ronnie has enabled us to play a note and then let him show what he can do on top of it, instead of just having the vocals follow the riff."

As regards working with Vinnie, as opposed to Bill Ward, Iommi stated: "It was strange because I'd played with Bill for 15 years. I must admit, I never thought anyone else would be able to do it but it was great the way Vinnie fitted in. Actually his style's not that different to Bill's funnily enough, although he's probably a bit more technical. It's a bit awkward for someone to come into a band and be confronted with an album not knowing everyone very well, but Vinnie seemed to cope."

Tony also revealed that the next Black Sabbath album would be a double live package. "It'll be good to have a proper live LP at last," he said, "rather than the garbage that came out before ('Live At Last') We were totally embarrassed when we heard that – it was so old. If it had been any good we'd have put it out ourselves but we didn't even bother."

Black Sabbath had successfully launched themselves into the 80's, and in spite of their personnel changes, had proved that they were still very much a force to be reckoned with in the heavy metal world.

Adrian Boot

Ronnie Dio

SONS OF SABBATH

Vinnie Appice

Big pic: Simon Fowler/LFI Small pic: Ross Halfin

5. LIVE EVIL

David Wainwright

WHEN BLACK Sabbath toured the UK at the beginning of last year, all had seemed to be well within the band. After the personnel changes that had occurred over the past few years, things had settled down and both Ronnie Dic and Vinnie Appice appeared to have become integral members of the group.

However, over the ensuing months the Sabs stability began to break down and by the end of the year it was announced that Dio and Appice had left. So what had gone wrong?

"It was just a case of personality clashes really," explained Tony Iommi. "It had reached the stage where we couldn't work together anymore. They'd got a bit overtaken by it all and had started to get a bit too domineering. At first, things were going great but then towards the end I think they became rather over-confident. We like to work as a team but we'd all started arguing, which just wasn't on. So they split."

Prior to the break-up though, the Sabs had managed to record a live album and consequently the excellent 'Live Evil' has emerged.

"We're really pleased with it,' declares Iommi. "We've had to live with that awful 'Live At Last' for some time and that's been a real pain in the arse. We've no idea at all how it came out. The tapes were like complete write-offs and I don't know how they got put onto disc. Admittedly, they were going to be a live album at some stage but then we decided to scrap them and as far as we knew they were finished with. They were really embarrasing, believe me.

'We're really happy with 'Live Evil' though and I think that it's pretty representative of our recent stage shows. The overall sound is good and it's not just something that's been quickly put together and come out. As far as we're concerned, it's the first and only Black Sabbath live album."

It's somewhat ironic though that the package should surface after the band has undergone another split. 'Live Evil' has also hit the streets in the wake of Ozzy Osbourne's 'Talk Of The Devil', which comprised old Sabbath standards.

Tony: "That seemed a bit strange to me that Ozzy should have done that. I mean he didn't really need to do all the old stuff because he'd got his direction with his own band. But I don't think that the sales of our one will be affected though because it's like two completely different bands. There's also quite a lot of stuff from 'Heaven And Hell' and 'Mob Rules' on our one."

For a long time, a reconcilliation between Ozzy and the Sabs had seemed impossible, but recently *Kerrang!* pictured Osbourne and Iommi together backstage at the former's Birmingham NEC show. Apparently, both parties had settled their differences some time earlier in Los Angeles.

"All the back-stabbing had got a bit out of hand," reckons Iommi, "and it was all a lot different when we actually got together. Ozzy was in LA at the same time as us and he actually called me up one night to see if I wanted to come out for a drink . . . at two o'clock in the morning! Then he came over and everything was fine."

All may be well between Ozzy and Tony, but of course the Sabs still have to face the task of getting themselves back on their feet again and they're currently looking for a new drummer and vocalist. One wonders whether they actually considered calling it a day this time but, according to Tony, this was definitely not the case.

"Oh no, we didn't think like that at all," maintains the guitarist. "In fact it's given us more of an opening and more of a push to go ahead and do things we want to do in our own time.

"In the past it's always been such a rush what with touring and recording so tightly planned that we've never had the opportunity to do what we want to do. Now, Geezer and I have got the time to do it. We've got the chance to write an album that we can turn round and say we're really proud of.

"To be quite honest, we weren't very pleased with 'Mob Rules'. The whole thing just went on too long from our point of view. We were stuck in LA for so long doing it, that we seemed to lose our objectivity and consequently the direction was a bit off. You can't just write stuff like a machine – another number, another number – which it was starting to get like.

"In fact on that album we'd thrown out stuff that was actually better than some of the things we ended up putting on. We were just so confused at the end that we didn't know what was good or bad. There was no time to sit back and reflect upon it. Living in Los Angeles sort of bogged us down and I think it affected what we were puttting out."

So you weren't actually happy living there?

"No we got pissed off with it, if the truth be known. Everywhere's good at first if you don't overdo it but we were there so long in the end that we just couldn't wait to get out. I think we were really beginning to lose touch with reality and now that we're back home things are a lot better."

Both Tony and Geezer are currently residing in the UK and they hope to have Black Sabbath back as a working concern in the not-too-distant future. They're now under the management wing of Don Arden, and Iommi is quite content with the way things are being handled.

"This is the clearest part we've had for a long time, he assesses. "We're able to work things out instead of paying out money left, right and centre, not really knowing where it's going. The whole management scene had become a nightmare for us over the years. There were so many changes that we never seemed to be aware of what was happening around us – nothing was ever planned properly.

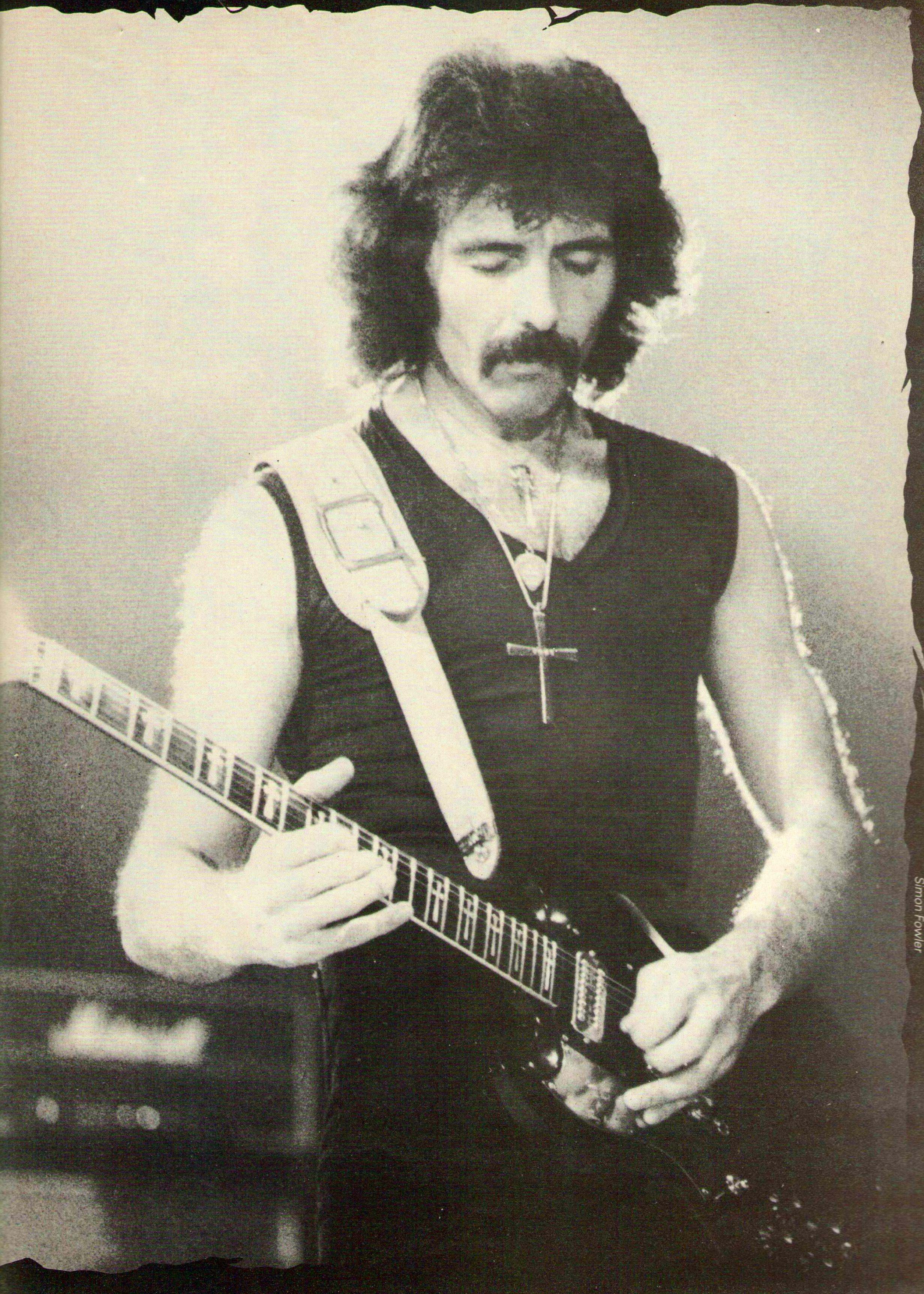
You must have been ripped off for huge amounts over the years?

"Multi-millions . . . . it's got to be. I know for a fact that in 1973 we lost at least seven million with the old management. Money that was invested on our behalf suddenly disappeared when stocks and shares went down overnight. From being a millionaire, suddenly the next day you wonder where it's all gone! Now we're gonna make sure everything goes right."

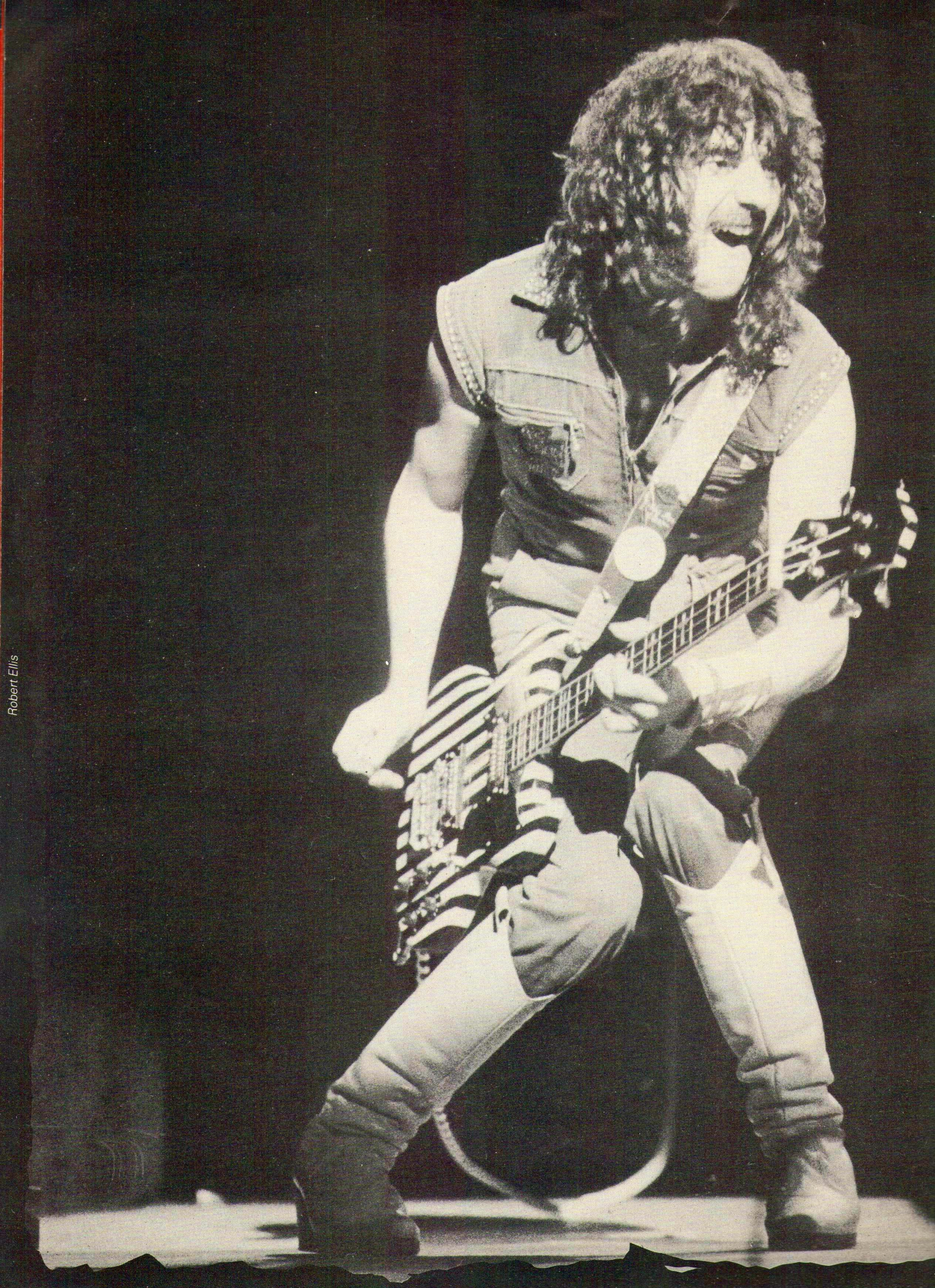
So there you have it – the story of Black Sabbath right up to the present day. No doubt, the coming months will see the unveiling of their new line-up and Tony hopes that the group will be recording and touring before the end of '83. Finally, I asked him whether he ever listens back to the old albums.

"Oh yeah," he replied. "I have a listen back sometimes. It's interesting and you tend to think what things would be like with different production and all that. Every LP brings back memories of what was going on at the time, so it's fun to put them on from time to time."

Here's to the next 15 years . . .



Simon Fowler



Robert Ellis

David Wainwright

Fin Costello

SONS OF SABBATH

ALTHOUGH THIS magazine is primarily concerned with Black Sabbath, readers may well be interested to learn about the current activities of recently departed members, Ronnie Dio and Vinnie Appice. It transpires that the pair are still working together, as the former Sabs vocalist explained in a telephone interview from his home in Los Angeles.

I'm in the studio doing my own LP," revealed Ronnie, "and I'm working with Vinnie, Jimmy Bain and a young Irish guitarist called Vivian Campbell who was in the group Sweet Savage – he's a real good player too."

It was interesting to learn that Ronnie was working with his old Rainbow pal Jimmy Bain and I wondered how that reunion had come together.

"Well, when Vinnie and I decided that we were going to continue working together, we came over to England in search of a bassist and a guitarist. We definitely wanted to use British musicians – I've always been very heavily influenced by the scene over there – and didn't really want to work with Americans.

"As soon as we got to London, the first person I called was Jimmy because I thought that he might be able to recommend some people and it turned out that he wasn't doing anything at the time. We then decided to have a blow and he recommended Viv and things seemed to work out very well. Jimmy and Vinnie make a great rhythm section and so they decided to come over to the States."

Consequently, the four musicians began working in Los Angeles. Ronnie: "I can't believe how well things have turned out. The LP is going very well and the music is pretty well an extension of what I've always done, and have been associated with in Black Sabbath and Rainbow. I've written quite a bit of the material and Jimmy and I have written one song – I expect that there'll be more collaboration as we carry on."

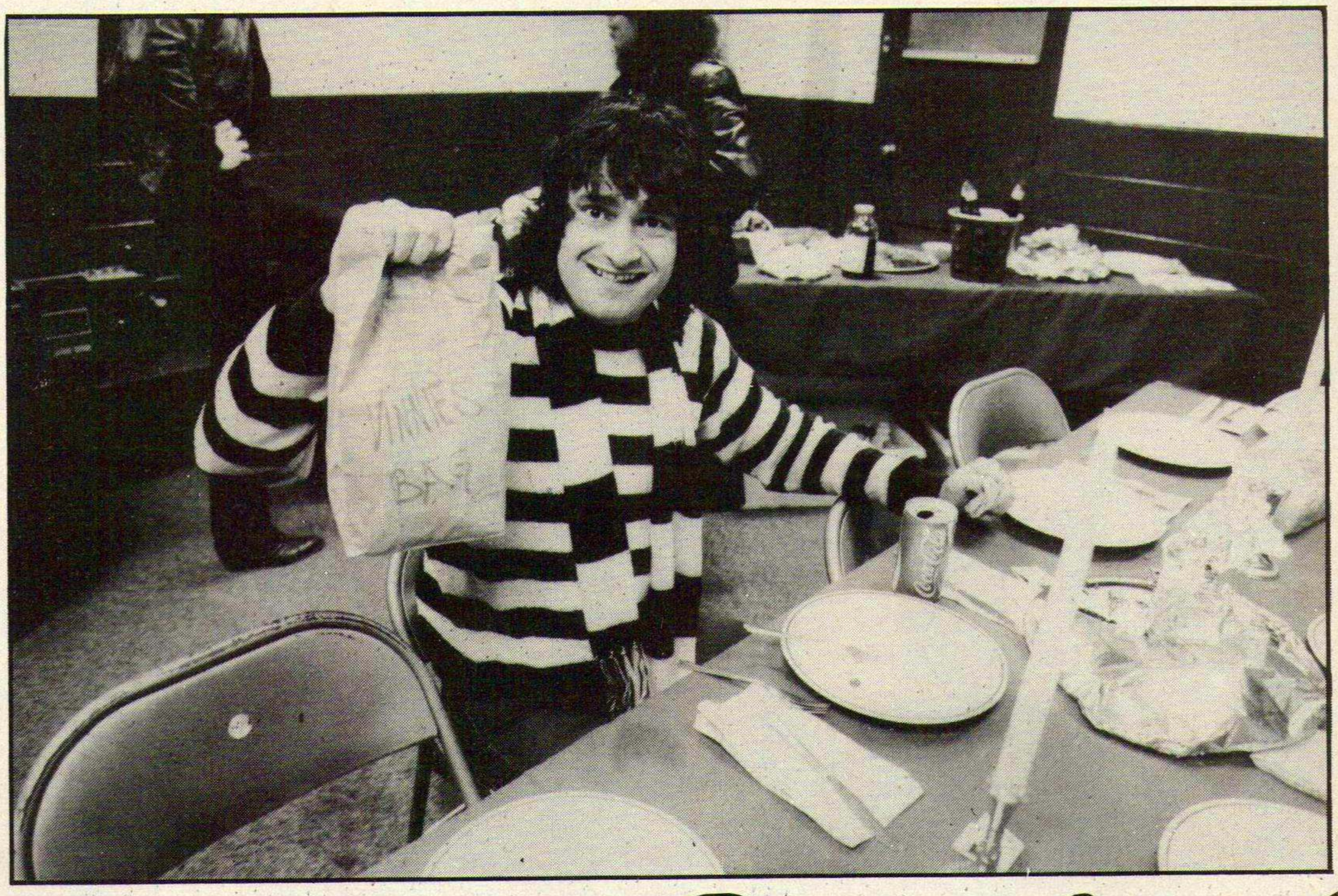
The name of the group will be Dio (a little pretentious when one considers that this is the Italian for 'God'!) and Ronnie hopes to have the debut LP out by the middle of April. Did he have the idea for a solo album at the back of his mind for some time?

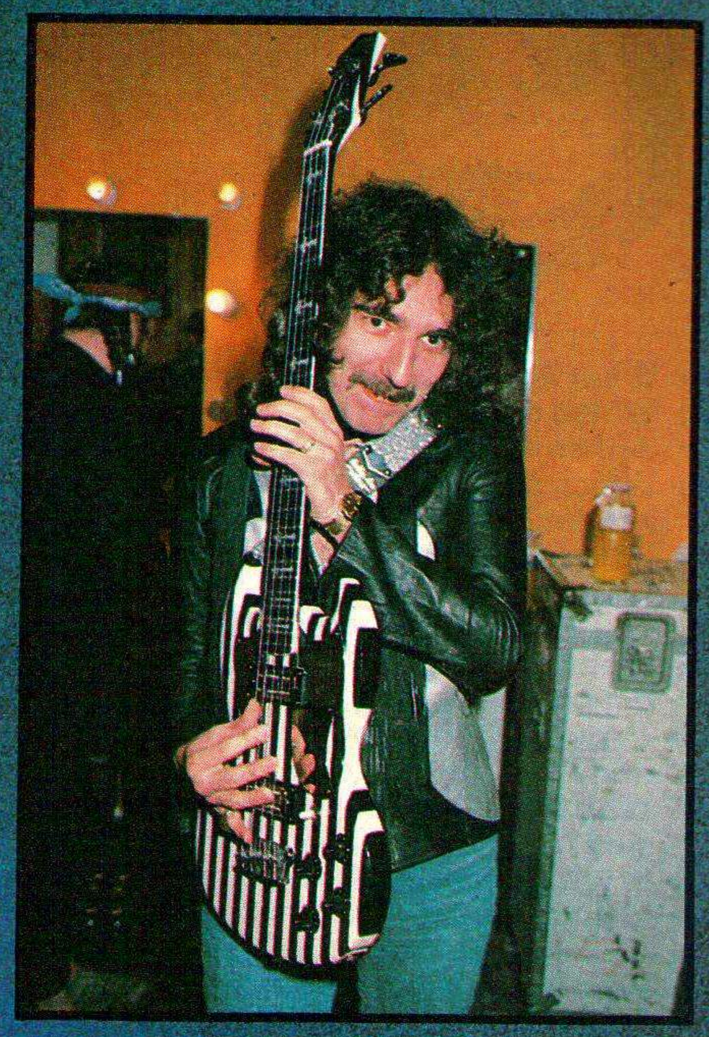
Yeah, in fact I actually signed the contract two years but my touring and overall commitments with Sabbath prevented me from getting on with it. While I was a member of the band, Black Sabbath always came first and foremost and I was never gonna put it in second place."

Why did Dio leave the Sabbs?

"At this juncture, I'd rather not say anything," he replied.

I wonder why? Anyway, best of luck to him . . .

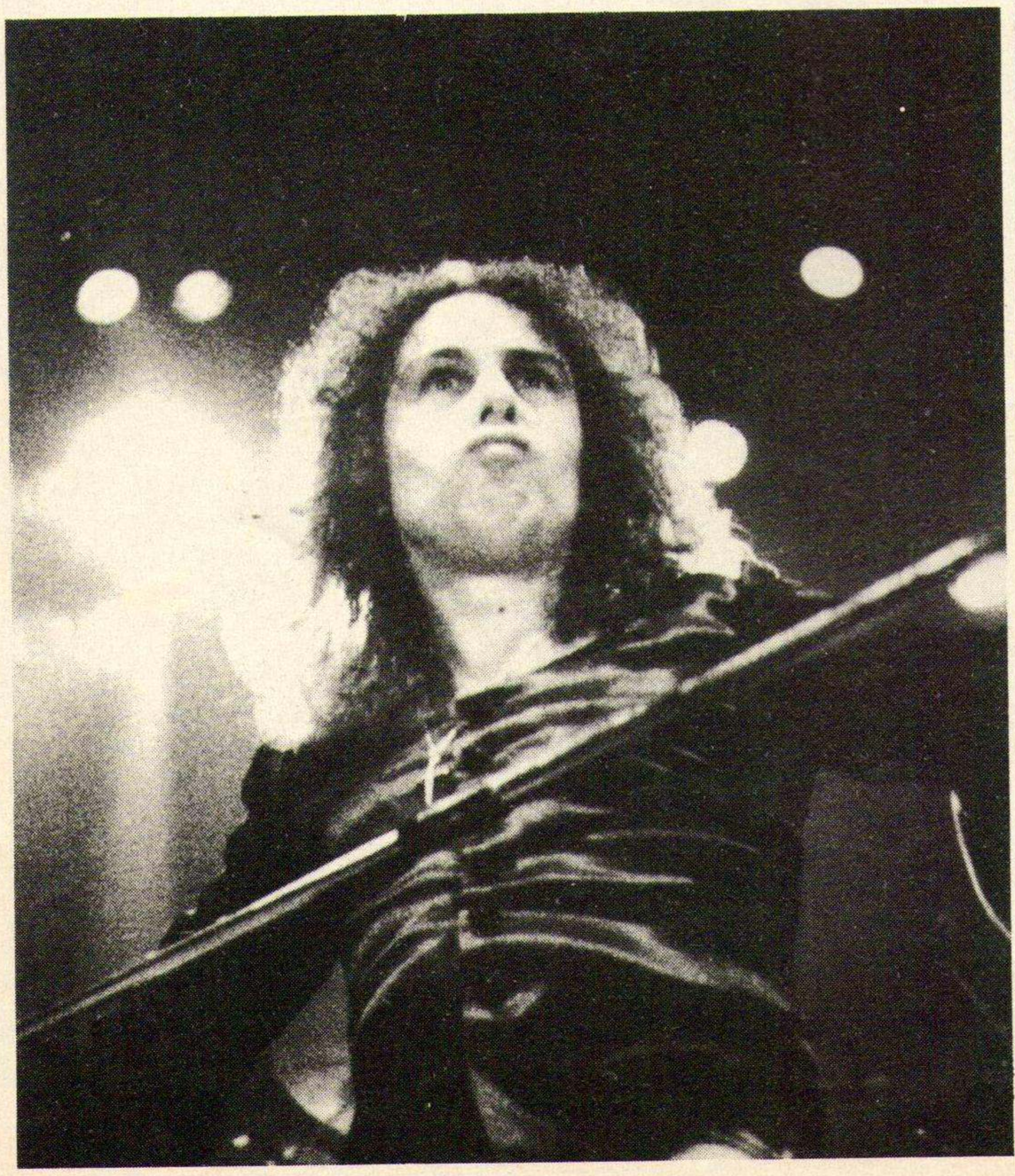




Big pic George Bodnar/Small pic Robert Ellis

QUIZ

1) What is Geezer's christian name?
2) Which member of Black Sabbath enjoyed a brief stint in Jethro Tull?
3) Which songs from 'Heaven & Hell' were released as singles?
4) How many albums has Ozzy released since he left the Sabbs?
5) Can you name the Ozzy LP's?
6) What was the last record Ronnie Dio made with Rainbow before he joined Sabbath?
7) Tony Iommi produced a band for Jet Records in the mid-70's – can you name them?
8) Which tune on the 'Technical Ecstacy' LP did Bill Ward sing?
9) In which year did Van Halen support the Sabs?
10) Who opened for Sabbath on their 1980 UK tour?
11) After which album did Ozzy first leave the band?
12) Who was his temporary replacement?
13) 'Sabbath Bloody Sabbath' was released on WWA Records – what did those initials stand for?
14) Which Sabbath classic starts with a 'cough'?
15) Where was the band's first British gig as Black Sabbath?
16) Who wrote the song 'Warning'?
17) Name the only Sabbath LP to feature a group photo on the front?
18) And which cover features an illustration of the group on the rear?
19) What was Sabbath's first ever single?
20) At which UK festival were the Sabs due to appear in 1981?
21) When the pulled out who took over their spot?
22) What was the last Sabbath album to feature Bill Ward?
23) Who was Sabbath's first manager?
24) And who is their current manager?
25) The song 'Wicked World' is featured on the first LP – true or false?
26) On which hand does Tony Iommi have plastic tips on a couple of fingers?
27) Who plays keyboards on 'Live Evil'?
28) Who produced the 'Mob Rules' LP?
29) What was the opening track on the ghastly 'Live At Last'?
30) In which two British cities was that album recorded?



Simon Fowler

Michael Putland

Gus Stewart

1) Terence.
2) Tony Iommi.
3) Die Young & Neon Knights
4) Three.
5) Blizzard of Ozz, Diary Of A Madman & Talk Of The Devil.
6) Long Live Rock'n'Roll.
7) Quartz.
8) It's Alright.
9) 1978.
10) Girlschool.
11) Technical Ecstasy.
12) Dave Walker.
13) World Wide Artists.
14) Sweet Leaf.
15) Carlisle.
16) Aynsley Dunbar.
17) Sabotage.
18) Heaven & Hell.
19) Evil Woman.
20) Port Vale HM Holocaust.
21) Ozzy Osbourne.
22) Heaven & Hell.
23) Jim Simpson.
24) Don Arden.
25) False.
26) Right.
27) Geoff Nicholls.
28) Martin Birch.
29) Tomorrow's Dream.
30) London & Manchester.

SABBATH DISCOGRAPHY

BLACK SABBATH (Vertigo VO 6 – February 1970)
WHAT CAN one say about this album that could give it even half the justice that it deserves? While in the 60's, The Shadows and suchlike sent our bigger brothers and sisters racing to the cupboard in search of a tennis raquet or broomstick for some posing, 'Black Sabbath' sent yours truly rushing down to the old man's shed in search of a sharpened axe to test out on the household pets!

This was the year I traded my shorts for loon pants, grew my hair and stopped washing, and started scowling at anyone who was over 15 – my initiation to yobdom and metal! *PM*
THIRTEEN YEARS old, and yet this still sounds great. The trickle of rainfall, the toll of the bell and the doom-laiden sound of thunder open what must surely rank as one of *the* classic heavy metal albums, alongside Purple's 'In Rock' and the second Zeppelin opus.

The timeless quality of this record is quite amazing and aside from the outstanding title cut there are other such gems as 'The Wizard', 'N.I.B.' and 'Evil Woman'. Tony Iommi delivers some virtuoso guitar on the Aynsley Dunbar-penned 'Warning' and shows his dexterity as an axeman throughout.

No law-abiding headbanger should be without a copy. *SG*

PARANOID (Vertigo 6360 071 – September 1970)
LIKE THE first album, 'Paranoid' was recorded within a very short space of time but has again managed to withstand the test of time. The outstanding cuts were 'Iron Man', 'Fairies Wear Boots' and 'War Pigs', which, incidentally, was the original LP title – the latter was considered unsuitable in the wake of the Vietnamese war.

The actual song 'Paranoid' saw the band appear on Top Of The Pops and has of course been released on numerous occasions. No doubt it'll be due for re-issue some time in 1985! *SG*
BELIEVE IT or not, they used to play 'Fairies Wear Boots' down the local disco and if you could shake your afghan to it then you stood a good chance of scoring some jailbait for the night!

'War Pigs' is one of my all time favourite album tracks and I'll never forget seeing the band play 'Paranoid' on TOTP, shining like diamonds in a proverbial 'shit-heap'. Like its predecessor, a must for all genuine HM fans. *PM*

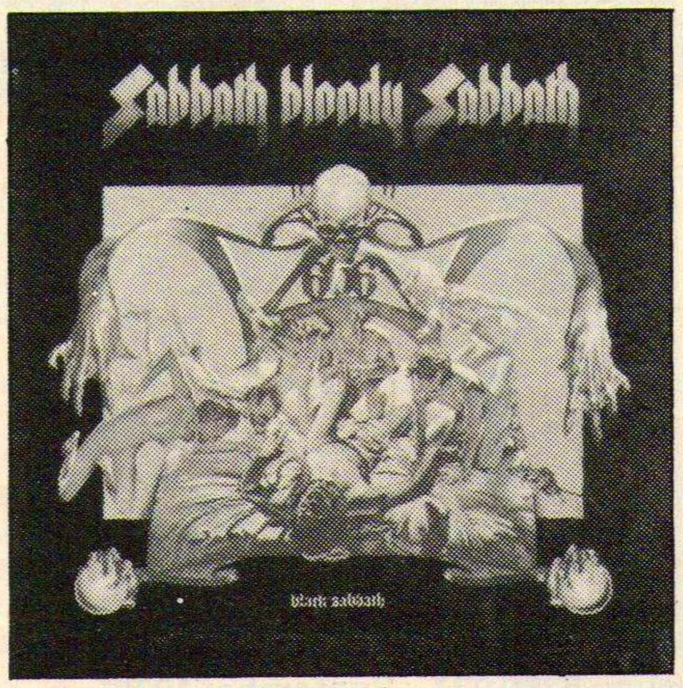
MASTER OF REALITY (Vertigo 6360 050 – July 1971)
A MUSICAL highpoint for the band. The opening cut 'Sweet Leaf' probably marks the first studio recording of smegma in action, as Oz coughs his way through Iommi's mayhemic chord freakout.

'Children Of The Grave' is *the* outstanding track and overall the album demonstrated the band's unlimited talents. *PM*
'MASTER OF Reality' evidenced a distinct change in the music and saw the introduction of several instrumentals – 'Embryo' and 'Orchid'. One of my personal faves was the serene 'Solitude' but the band proved that they could still rock on the anthemic 'Children Of The Grave' and 'Sweet Leaf', which wasn't a song about tea, I might add! *SG*

BLACK SABBATH VOL 4 (Vertigo 6360 071 – September 1972)
INITIALLY THIS album proved to be somewhat of a let-down, but it has grown on me over the years. Produced by the lads themselves, it reveals their adventurous spirit and once and for all killed off cynical accusations that Sabbath were just a bunch of untalented Brummie bozos. *PM*
I'VE ALWAYS had mixed feelings about 'Sabbath Vol 4'. Tracks like 'Snowblind', 'Tomorrow's Dream' and 'Changes' couldn't be faulted and 'Supernaut' came close to being a classic, but I'm not sure about some of the others. 'Wheels Of Confusion', clocking in at just over eight minutes, was a little too much for these ears to handle.

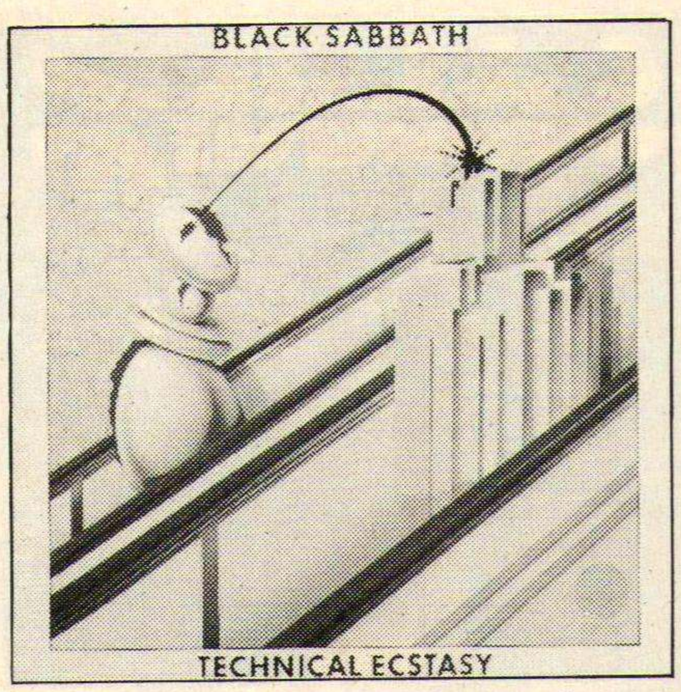
The whole thing was packaged in a colourful gatefold sleeve and it was interesting to note the drug references in the dedication to the 'great COKE-Cola Company of Los Angeles' and the name of the Sabs publishing company . . . Rollerjoint Music!!! So that's where they got their inspiration! *SG*

SABBATH DISCOGRAPHY



SABBATH BLOODY SABBATH (Nems NEL 6017 – December 1973)
REGARDED BY many Sabbath fans as their finest moment, I must confess that it's not one of my favourites . . . heathen! 'Killing Yourself', 'Fluff', 'Sabbra Cadabra' and the title track got the thumbs up but I'm afraid the others were met with indifference. *SG*
PROBABLY MY favourite Sabbath album, definitely one of the best produced HM albums of all time, that includes the road-weary anthem 'Killing Yourself To Live'. The LP convinced me that, rather than being a monotonic moron, Ozzy Osbourne was one of the true original vocalists in heavy rock. *PM*

SABOTAGE (Nems 9199 001 – July 1975)
'SABOTAGE' CONTAINS one of the all time classic Black Sabbath tunes 'Symptom Of The Universe'. To me, this really represented what the band were all about and was an absolute killer on stage. But don't get me wrong, this wasn't just a one-track platter and there were plenty of other gems in cuts like 'Hole In The Sky', 'Megalomania' and 'Am I Going Insane?'.
Sabbath's sound was rapidly expanding and by now they had come a long way from the basic, earthy heavy metal contained on the early releases. Some thought that they were going downhill, but personally I had no complaints. *SG*



TECHNICAL ECSTASY (Vertigo – 9102 750 – October 1976)
MANY (INCLUDING Ozzy Osbourne) felt that Black Sabbath had deviated too much on this LP by attempting a rather over-produced album. However, to tell the truth, this still ranks as my favourite Sab album recorded with Ozzy in the group. It's a sorely underrated platter and comprises a string of classic cuts.
The first side included 'Back Street Kids' and 'Gypsy', but it was during the second half that the Sabs really hit home. Side two kicks off with 'All Moving Parts' which is followed by the raunchy 'Rock 'n' Roll Doctor' – check out the riff and you'll see where Saxon got 'Wheels Of Steel' from. Next up with the peaceful 'She's Gone' and finally, in stark contrast, came the totally riotous 'Dirty Women'.
Bill Ward also sang on the track 'It's Alright' and to these ears 'Technical Ecstasy' could only be described as brilliant. *SG*

NEVER SAY DIE (Vertigo 9102 751 – October 1978)
THE 'NEVER Say Die' album was originally intended for release to coincide with the Sabs '10th Anniversary Tour' but eventually it came out three or four months later. It wasn't a fantastic record and one can understand Ozzy's dissatisfaction with it. The material was far too diverse and the band only really hit home with the title track, 'Johnny Blade' and 'Juniors Eyes'. At the time the band's future had begun to look bleak indeed. *SG*

SABBATH DISCOGRAPHY

HEAVEN AND HELL (Vertigo 9102 751 – April 1980)
A NEW start, and the thunderous opener 'Neon Knights' demonstrated that there was still plenty of life left in Sabbath. Dio seemed to be the perfect replacement for Ozzy and producer Martin Birch successfully captured the true spirit of the revitalised Sabbath. *PM*
I COULDN'T agree more with Pete's comments and in my mind 'Heaven And Hell' was one of the best hard rock releases of 1980. Prime cuts were the title track, 'Die Young' and 'Children Of The Sea' and the all-round musicianship simply couldn't be faulted.

Tony Iommi laid down some of his best studio guitar work and his playing on tracks like 'Lonely Is The Word' and the aforementioned 'Die Young' was quite splendid. Ronnie Dio's lyrical contribution gave the Sabs wider spectrum in their songs and he certainly managed to revitalise the combo. *SG*

MOB RULES (Vertigo 6302 119 – October 1981)
THE WRITING team of Dio and Iommi had evolved as the band planted their collective noggins firmly into the 80's. This platter features some tight, straightforward material such as the title cut and 'Voodoo', which in my 'umble opinion are the best songs to emerge from the Sabs Mk 2. *PM*
AFTER THE excellent 'Heaven And Hell' I'd eagerly awaited hearing Sabbath's follow-up, but on doing so I must admit that I was rather disappointed. 'The Sign Of The Southern Cross', 'Turn Up The Night' and 'Voodoo' were easily the best numbers but I felt that the Sabs paled on some of the others. *SG*

LIVE EVIL (Vertigo 6650 009 – January 1983)
AT LAST the Sabs were able to put out an official live album and what a cracker it is, too. However, it's somewhat ironic that the record should have emerged in the wake of another bust-up in the band.

Nevertheless, 'Live Evil' serves as a fine epitaph to Black Sabbath Mk 2 and is an aural delight from start to finish. To these ears, it tops Ozzy's 'Talk Of The Devil' album, which wasn't half bad and my only complaint is the sad omission of the masterful 'Die Young'. *SG*
THE FIRST and *only* Black Sabbath live album. *PM*

FOOTNOTE:
ALL OF the above albums are listed with their original catalogue numbers, but readers may well find that the records are available under different ones since most have been re-released at various times.

Please also note that 'We Sold Our Souls For Rock 'n' Roll', 'Greatest Hits' and 'Live At Last' have been omitted since these were basically attempts by Nems to cash in on the band's success and therefore can't be regarded as 'official' outputs.

SINGLES

Evil Woman/Wicked World (Fontana TF 1067 – January 1970)
Evil Woman/Wicked World (Vertigo V2 – March 1970)
Paranoid/The Wizard (Vertigo 6059 010 – July 1970)
Tomorrow's Dream/Laguna Sunrise (Vertigo 6059 061 – September 1972)
Sabbath Bloody Sabbath/Changes (WWA WWS 002 – December 1973)
Am I Going Insane?/Hole In The Sky (NEMS 6165 300 – February 1976)
Never Say Die/She's Gone (Vertigo SAB 1 – June 1978)
Hard Road/Sympton Of The Univers (Vertigo SAB 2 – October 1978)
Neon Knights/Children Of The Sea (Vertigo SAB 3 – June 1980)
Paranoid/Snowblind (NEMS BSS 101 – June 1980)
Die Young/Heaven And Hell (Vertigo SAB 4 – November 1980)
Mob Rules/Die Young (Vertigo SAB 5 – October 1981
Turn Up The Night/Lonely Is The Word (Vertigo SAB 6 – January 1982)
NB: Most of the above are now deleted – avid collectors may be interested to know that the last three singles have all been available in 12-inch versions, with 'Turn Up The Night' also available as a picture disc.

Alan Johnson

Roger Morton

Roger Morton

Ross Halfin

Jill Furmanovsky

Doug McKenzie

Happy 10th Birthday

Ross Halfin